HISTORY OF ENGLISH NONCONFORMITY

HENRY W. CLARK

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.
THE CHRISTIAN METHOD OF ETHICS.
THE CHRIST FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN.
THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN (WESTMINSTER NEW TESTAMENT).
MEANINGS AND METHODS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.
LAWS OF THE INNER KINGDOM.
STUDIES IN THE MAKING OF CHARACTER.
TOWARDS A PERFECT MAN.
ECHOES FROM THE HEIGHTS AND DEEPS (POEMS).

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BY

HENRY W. CLARK

VOL. II

FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE CLOSE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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NOTE

As this second volume appears at some little interval after the first, it had better be said that it is governed by the same general idea. That is, the object of the book is not only to bring together the actual facts of Nonconformist history, but to ascertain how far concrete Nonconformity has manifested the original and fundamental Nonconformist ideal. An exposition of that ideal was given in the introductory part of Volume I. At some risk of repetition (a risk deliberately encountered because the importance of bearing Nonconformity's fundamental ideal in mind is so great for a right understanding of the book) phrases suggesting and recalling that ideal have been employed at a good many points where opportunity offered. But the *whole* content of the Nonconformist idea and ideal—as given in the introductory pages referred to—needs to be grasped by the reader in order to a true following of the study.

Mr. Lewis Melville has for this volume, as for the first, won my sincere thanks by his kindness in reading the proofs.

HENRY W. CLARK.

HARPENDEN, HERTS,
December 1912.

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BOOK III

THE FADING IDEAL

CHAPTER I

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

1660–1689

SECTION 1

The Defeat of Presbyterianism

AUTHORITIES.—The chief source of our knowledge is Baxter himself, whose *Reliquiae Baxterianae* gives a minute account of the events of these two years, in so far as they relate to religion. Though Baxter of course writes from the Presbyterian point of view, neither his accuracy nor his fairness can be seriously impugned. If to Baxter we add Clarendon's *Life and Continuation*, Burnet's *History of My Own Time*, and Kennett's *Register and Chronicle*, we get a very complete panoramic view of the entire range of happenings up to 1662. Collier's *Ecclesiastical History* and Neal's *History of the Puritans*, though useful for cursory consultation on some points, add practically nothing to what is given by the books already named. Masson's *Life of Milton* affords, for this period, as for the one preceding, a careful account written in the modern way, while Lingard's *History of England* gives a summary in which the most important events are thrown up in bold relief. Stoughton's *History of Religion in England* is an impartial record of events, and contains a mass of interesting detail. Pepys's *Diary* should not be neglected, as it takes the reader to the standpoint of a shrewd and observant man of the world. Many of the documents alluded to are given *in extenso* in *Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662*, edited by George Gould.

THE defeat of Presbyterianism is the first outstanding event in the religious history of England after the King's return. It can hardly be said that this event inaugurated or rendered inevitable that struggle for existence which up to the Toleration Act of 1689 Nonconformity was fated to wage; for even if the ecclesiastical ferment of the Restoration had settled down to a different result so far as Presbyterianism and the Church of England were concerned, the course of Independency, Quakerism, and the other Nonconformist bodies would have been (with certain qualifications by and by to

be remarked) pretty much what in actual fact it turned out to be. Certainly Presbyterianism, instead of being itself compelled to endure a share of the weight resting upon Nonconformist shoulders, would have sat upon the bench as one of the judges to decide how far Nonconformity must be thrust under the yoke; but so far as regards Nonconformity in general, the only change would have been that the student of its fortunes, as he looks back, would have missed one of the flags which now he discerns floating over the Nonconformist camp, and would have had to rank as one of Nonconformity's opposing forces a party now, by sheer compulsion of circumstances, numbered among its friends. Had Presbyterianism conquered instead of lost, the essential factors in the subsequent Nonconformist position, the essential facts in Nonconformist history, would probably have shown out upon history's page much as now they show. It was not Presbyterianism's failure that inaugurated, or rendered inevitable, or even (so far as Nonconformity's relations with the dominant power are concerned) modified and gave direction to, the Nonconformist fight for life. In regard to that fight, Presbyterianism's failure was but a side issue, when all is said. But inasmuch as the failure of Presbyterianism to maintain the position it aimed at occupying did throw Presbyterianism over to the Nonconformist side, its failure becomes an outstanding fact in the Nonconformist tale; and the historian's first duty is to note how the Presbyterianism which played perhaps the principal part in bringing about the King's return brought about also, through that very act, its own defeat.

The three principal factors in the situation at the time of the King's return were the King himself, the Presbyterians, and the nation at large; and it is in the temper of these three factors, and in their interplay, that the key to an understanding of the immediately subsequent happenings is found. In a survey of the three, it is with the King that we naturally begin.

That Charles desired a general toleration in religious matters may be taken as established; and upon the problem suggested on an earlier page[1]—the problem as to whether

[1] Vol. I. p. 409.

or no he intended to keep the promise made in the Declaration of Breda—the weight of evidence forces an affirmative reply. We shall presently see how various acts of his reign, taken together, form the cumulative proof. But if Charles favoured toleration, it was not because he had any real care either for religion or for toleration in itself. His object in assuming a care for toleration was merely to secure a free field for Roman Catholicism in England; and his object in assuming a care for Roman Catholicism was partly to show gratitude to Roman Catholic France for her countenancing of him in his years of exile, and, still more, to secure her further countenancing of him in his efforts to build up and consolidate autocratic power after his return. It may be as well to say at this point, by way of a more general characterisation of the second Charles, that none of his emotions or desires, save his passion for pleasure and ease, were on the great scale; and when one speaks of his leanings towards toleration, or his gratitude to the Romanists of the Continent, or of his care for autocratic power, one does not mean that any one of these feelings was more than lukewarm. Charles was indolently anxious that things should go well with him—and that was the whole man. His preference was for autocracy, for this was the Stuart tradition and lay in the Stuart blood; but he would not, even for autocracy's sake, run any particular risks. He was grateful to the Continental Catholics; but this was merely because an indolent disposition always answers unresistingly, so long as gratitude does not cost too much, to the instinct which declares that it is fitting for gratitude to meet service or gifts. Only in his Declaration of Indulgence of 1672 does Charles afford an instance of a daring challenge apparently backed by courage that is going to see the thing through, be the consequences what they may; and even in that solitary instance, the subsidence of the high mood was swift as its mounting had been. Charles had no great passions or ambitions that beset him behind and before and laid their hands upon him. But, so long as this is understood by way of qualification, we may repeat that he favoured toleration for the sake of Roman Catholicism, and that he favoured Roman Catholicism, partly out of gratitude to Roman Catholic France, and partly because he

hoped to use Roman Catholic France for his selfish ends at home. For Catholicism as a religious institution he cared no more than he did for Protestantism: the deist's creed, if any at all, was probably the one that he could with something like conscientiousness have signed;[1] and all the evidence that has been produced to prove his Catholicism goes no further than to prove that there were times when to be thought a Catholic helped him in the playing of his game. Even the Treaty of Dover, signed in May of 1670, notwithstanding its provisions for the turning of England into a Catholic State, only shows, not the King's Roman Catholic zeal, but his indifference to religion of every kind. For Charles was not so far aloof from practical realities as to suppose that England could really be brought back in this high-handed manner—as by a sort of *fiat* sounded from the throne—to the Roman fold. The whole thing was merely a matter of gratifying (and hoodwinking) Lewis of France, and winning from him, for that gratification, an ample payment in coin.[2] If Lewis chose to put his trust in promises which could never be fulfilled, that was his affair. Charles was no sincere Catholic—except, perhaps, at the very end when, with death in prospect, submission to the Catholic Church seemed to afford a chance of cheating the devil out of a soul forfeited to his hands. But on toleration of Catholicism he was, for the reasons given, earnestly bent. Moreover, since for any special favour to Catholicism the nation was quite unprepared, the King's intention of showing it must be disguised under a general proposal of favour to other religions as well. In that way the nation might be prevented from realising how special the intention toward Catholicism was, and might slip all unwittingly into assent. It was like hustling a suspected character through a guarded barrier by surrounding him with an eminently respectable crowd. And it was in accordance with this ruling idea that

[1] Welwood, *Memoirs of the most Material Transactions, etc.* (ed. 1820), p. 131.

[2] The scheme, as a whole, with its complicated bargaining and its ulterior motives, lies beyond our scope. Consult Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 536 ff., remarking specially the note on p. 545; Masson, *Life of Milton*, vi. 575 ff.; Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 91, 92 and 249-255. At the last point the text of the treaty is given in full.

Charles's attitude towards other religious bodies was set. Episcopacy and the Episcopalians were, so to say, in the nature of things. The restoration of the ancient throne was naturally taken to imply also the restoration of the older Church. This was taken for granted by practically all concerned. There was no surprise that the episcopal and archiepiscopal sees should stand forth occupied again—that the aged Juxon should at once become Archbishop of Canterbury and that all the lesser planets should begin once more to revolve round the central sun. Episcopacy was taken to have been merely lying dormant and to have an unquestionable right to its old place now that it was again awake.[1] To Charles, as to everybody else, its restoration was a matter of course. But Presbyterianism was a different matter. Towards Presbyterianism itself Charles could hardly be expected to feel much love; for although the Presbyterians had not been parties to his father's death, and had besides been the prime movers in bringing him back to his father's place, he would not forget that they had been, only a few shades less implacably than the Independents, his father's foes, and had at any rate done much to bring about that *débâcle* out of which his own shattered fortunes had so marvellously risen up again. The King's unwillingness to bow the knee to Presbyterianism was shown in an early conversation between him and certain Presbyterian ministers who, before his return, interviewed him at The Hague. Sharply he gave them to understand, when they expressed the hope that he would not in his own private worship use the Book of Common Prayer, that his right to liberty was as good as theirs, and that it would most certainly be claimed.[2] In regard to Presbyterianism, in fact, Charles had a feeling of mingled dislike and contempt—neither element, perhaps, being extremely strong, but both together in their union stiffening his attitude in no small degree; and the King probably expressed his

[1] This feeling was shared—and acted upon—by all ranks of the clergy. Mr. Hutton tells us (but without indicating where the incident took place) that concerning the day of the King's proclamation, "a typical parish register adds, 'on which day I, Stephen Hogg, began to use again the Book of Common Prayer'" (*The English Church from the Accession of Charles I. to the Death of Anne*, p. 181).

[2] Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, vi. 232.

real feeling about Presbyterianism when he told the Earl of Lauderdale that in his opinion "it was not a religion for gentlemen."[1] Still, toleration of Presbyterianism lay on the way to toleration of Romanism, and constituted, therefore, a point which must be passed. But Charles would not pass it unless the further goal were sure. In other words he was open to a deal. The Presbyterians could have their desired toleration if they, on their side, would consent to the Catholics sharing the boon. The terms of the bargain were not necessarily suggested with explicitness, but they could be easily enough understood. In the King's own mind, certainly, they were clear enough. And in respect of the Independents, much the same thing could be said. For the Independents themselves, indeed, Charles must have had a far stronger detestation than he felt for the Presbyterians. They had been much more active agents in that drama—at any rate in its final scenes—which had temporarily cost him his crown. They had rebelled on a scale and with an effectiveness to which the Presbyterians had not attained. Nevertheless, since the particular aim of toleration for Romanism could only be achieved (first of all covered, and then achieved) by means of a general toleration of all, a declaration under which Independents, with others, would benefit must be put in force. The Independents could not be direct participators in a bargain as the Presbyterians could be. They were not now the parties in possession of any important ground. They had nothing to offer. But they must be allowed to profit by any arrangement that might be made. This was the general attitude, the general policy, of the restored Charles. He had no sincere love for Roman Catholicism, but for reasons arising out of his personal political position, he desired Roman Catholicism to be freed from the disabilities under which it lay. He had no really single-minded desire to tolerate either Presbyterianism or Independency; but in order that Roman Catholicism might be tolerated, he was prepared to tolerate these. The Declaration of Breda was in fact sincere and insincere at the same time, if the paradox may pass. It was sincere in that Charles really intended, though only for his own private ends, to carry it out. It

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 195.

was insincere in that there lay behind it no real consideration for that principle of "liberty to tender consciences" whereon it was professedly based. In fine, it was with the idea of winning toleration for Catholicism under cover of, and by means of, a general toleration for all—with the idea of securing his own private purposes by professing devotion to a large ideal—that Charles came back.

Of the Presbyterians, it can only be said that they failed utterly to grasp the situation or to discern its possibilities and its threats. The fact that they constituted for the moment the party in power blinded them to other and more essential facts, and they did not perceive that the real question was not merely one of reducing to its *minimum* any sacrifice for which in the final settlement they might be called upon, but whether they would be able in that final settlement to retain any standing ground at all. All through those subsequent negotiations which were fated to end in their defeat, they do not appear to have understood that they were not so much negotiators as criminals on trial, and, moreover, criminals who were being tried with the rope already round their necks. They did not realise that although in what they did for the recall of the King they happened to represent the national will, the nation was really against them and their cause. They did not realise that although Charles gave them the status of negotiators for the time being, he only looked upon them and the controversy they dealt with as it were out of the corner of his eye, while his gaze was really fixed upon the issue of a larger and more complicated game—that as far as he was concerned they were only children whom he permitted to fancy themselves engaged in serious business as if grown up. The Presbyterians were deluded throughout. Whether or no there be any truth in that story which recounts how Mr. Case, one of the Presbyterian ministers who visited Charles at The Hague, putting his ear to the door of the private room wherein the King was praying, was "ravished to hear the pious ejaculations that fell from the King's lips,"[1] the

[1] *Secret History of the Reign of Charles II. and James II.*, p. 21. Among the "pious ejaculations" stands this prayer: "Lord, since Thou art pleased to restore me to the throne of my ancestors, grant me a heart constant in the exercise and protection of Thy true Protestant Religion. Never may I seek the

story at any rate photographs correctly the attitude of the Presbyterians at the time—so utterly did they misread, so easily were they fooled. To them the whole question at stake was the nature and extent of the coming compromise between the Episcopalians and themselves. Although the conception of the earlier Presbyterianism—the conception of an exclusively Presbyterian National Church — could no longer, it was seen, be insisted upon, it was still hoped and expected that a not too severely modified form of it might yet materialise when things had settled down. An incident which, while showing that the Presbyterian leaders were alive to the ultimate desires of the King, shows at the same time how oblivious they were of the set of the situation as a whole. When, during the negotiations of 1660 (to be presently glanced at), the Independents and Baptists presented a petition asking that, whatever settlement were determined upon, they should be allowed to worship in peace, Baxter and the other Presbyterian negotiators declined to consent to a clause embodying not merely freedom for the two particular petitioning bodies, but equal liberty for any religious association which did not threaten disturbance of the public peace. Very naturally the Independents were aggrieved, and showed at a later date that the wound smarted still;[1] but Baxter's account of the matter[2] shows that the refusal was based upon a fear (valid enough) that the clause would be used in the Romanist interest, and not upon any hostility to the Independents and Baptists themselves. Some sects were regarded by the Presbyterians as "tolerable," others as "intolerable"—the Papists, of course, coming under the second head. But while the Presbyterians evidently divined the intentions of Charles, they quite failed to see that it was only under some such clause as the one they ruled out that they would themselves be suffered to live—that it was not as a point on which their opinion was sought, but as an ultimatum, that the clause was submitted. They assumed the attitude of men who could still to a great extent dictate terms, not perceiving that all they could hope

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oppression of those who out of tenderness to their consciences are not free to conform to outward and indifferent ceremonies."

[1] *Infra*, p. 46. [2] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 277.

for was some measure of grace granted on terms they must unconditionally accept or reject. To the real heart of the position their gaze never reached.[1] They were complacently occupied with a delimitation of the boundaries between themselves and the Episcopalians whom they could not expect to bar entirely away. That question filled their world—and yet it was a question which in reality existed no more. It had been settled before they raised it by the forces which sprang on the one hand out of the national temper and on the other out of the King's secret desire and will. What the Presbyterians were really engaged upon was the profitless discussion of a case no longer open, though verdict and sentence had not been formally pronounced.

As to the nation at large—the third factor in the working out of the situation—its mood was one of passionate loyalty to the old order in Church and State, and its chief desire was to wipe out the recent past. And at the back of this was a feeling, not that any danger which had threatened the country from Church and King was now past, but that the danger had never really threatened at all to anything like the extent men, in their panic, had supposed. The nation was not, as after events were to prove, prepared to submit to untrammelled royal despotism; but it felt that the risk of such a thing was, if not absolutely non-existent, at any rate extremely remote. It still retained—as again after events were to show—its old hostility to Roman Catholicism; but it felt that past suspicion of Catholic leanings on the part of the King, and of a Catholic tendency on the part of the authorities of the Church, had been, if not quite groundless, at least exaggerated. In respect of the throne, all the faults and follies of the first Charles had come to look small through the haze of the intervening years; and although certain safeguards against their repetition by the second Charles were raised,[2] this was more by way of

[1] A different, but equally great, misunderstanding of the situation was that of Sharp (who afterwards became an Episcopalian Archbishop), the Scotch Presbyterians' Commissioner in London. He wrote home to the effect that the Presbyterian cause was "wholly given up and lost." But for this he blames, or affects to blame, the pliancy of the English Presbyterian leaders, and their willingness to make any compromise at all with the Episcopalians (Stephens, *Life of Sharp*, p. 52).

[2] On these see Trevelyan, *England under the Stuarts*, pp. 337-339.

avoiding such a self-stultification and such a confession of having been utterly in the wrong as an entirely unrestricted settlement would have implied, than from any idea that the safeguards were actually required. What the national attitude came to was an admission that in all the proceedings since 1640 too much had been made of very little: things were now to be taken back to the point at which, with the parting of the ways before them, the nation's guides had chosen wrong; and the old order was called back, not because its present representative had given any sign of repentance or promise of amendment, but because it was felt that its former representative, slightly blameworthy as he may have been, had been far too severely judged. The thing, in fact, was not so much a reconciliation as an admission that estrangement ought never to have taken place; or, if anything in the way of forgiveness was implied, it was from the King's side that it was taken to proceed. The nation had struck too hard, and was now bent upon making up for this by an eagerly gushing demonstration of love. The old crown and the old Church were to be made much of in proportion to the vindictiveness of the punishment which had been visited upon their former quite venial faults. When Charles had returned, writes Welwood, "he possessed so entirely the hearts of his people that they thought nothing was too much for them to grant, or for him to receive."[1] He was welcomed by nearly all in the spirit of Evelyn, who says of the King's entrance procession into the capital, "I stood in the Strand and beheld it, and blessed God."[2] This was the nation's mood.

Necessarily, it was in the nation's mood that the decisive factor of the situation lay. And this meant that for each of the other two—for Presbyterianism and for the King—there was difficulty ahead. For Presbyterianism, indeed, there was much more than difficulty. Any such co-ordinate establishment of Presbyterianism and Episcopacy as Presbyterianism itself hoped for was out of the question with a people determined to sweep away all traces of what it deemed its late debauch of folly: to perpetuate any form

[1] *Memoirs of the most Material Transactions, etc.* (ed. 1820), p. 112.
[2] *Diary and Correspondence* (ed. Bray), i. 337.

of Presbyterianism under national sanction would have been like putting up a monument to a wrong the people had itself committed; so that for the Presbyterians, unseeing though they themselves were, doom was signed and sealed. Of course, the feeling which told against the Presbyterians told against the Independents more strongly still; but with this we are not at the moment concerned. It is the national attitude toward Presbyterianism with which we are dealing; and in this no tinge of favour can have found place. For the King, too, the nation's mood—mood of passionate devotion to him as it was—contained elements which were bound to assert themselves against him so soon as he attempted to carry through his cherished ideas. For it was devoted to him just because it credited him with what he did not possess. It assumed in him the absence of any tendency either towards despotism or towards Rome, refused even to entertain the possibility of its existence—yet the tendency, as now we are aware, was there. Charles, therefore, must have known (or, if he did not know, was soon to learn) that the nation's loyalty was offered, not to the man he was, but to the man the nation thought him; and the difficulty of his position lay in this—that the moment he attempted to use for his own ends the loyalty which seemed to promise so much, that loyalty would drop its temperature or die. In the very act of using it he would waken it to a sense that it was founded upon a mistake. The final and decisive factor in the situation—to sum up—was the passionate national wish for a restoration of what had been overthrown, this passionate wish being founded upon a conviction that what had been overthrown had never deserved its fate. From such a passionate wish for a restoration of the old order Presbyterianism could hope for no reprieve. And the conviction on which the passionate wish was founded must either by its very existence prevent the King's Romeward leanings from becoming apparent or, if the King's Romeward leanings showed themselves in its despite, must in its destruction destroy the superstructure too, and bring the passionate love for the old order in ruins to the ground.

Immediately upon the King's return the interplay of the

three indicated forces began—to end in 1662 with that Act of Uniformity which was the outward and visible sign of the Presbyterian defeat. The initial item upon the record is the Presbyterian attempt at a compromise with the Episcopalians, an attempt at first not only countenanced, but for his own ends actually encouraged, by Charles, and an attempt which for a little while looked as if it were going to succeed. To the King's private mood we have already penetrated; and we have noted his willingness to show favour to the Presbyterians if by that road he might reach to a wider toleration from which Romanists should take benefit as well as the rest. The first practical result that issued from this condition of the royal mind was the appointment of certain Presbyterian ministers—Baxter, Calamy, and others—to be chaplains to the Court;[1] and the next was a request from the King that these chaplains should draw up a scheme of ecclesiastical settlement as to whose acceptance both they and the Episcopalians might be expected to come to terms.[2] Through successive meetings of Presbyterian ministers held at Sion College,[3] the desired scheme was duly beaten into shape for presentation to the King—the King intending, as was understood, to bring about between its authors and the Bishops a subsequent meeting at which the hatchet should be solemnly and finally interred. That Charles should thus request the Presbyterians, rather than the Episcopal party, to outline a scheme for judgment, and should design an offer to come from the Presbyterians to the Episcopalians rather than *vice versa*, shows how gracious to the Presbyterians he was at the moment prepared to be. The hoped-for meeting, however, did not take place; for, moderate as the Presbyterian proposals were, the Bishops, while sending a paper of written criticism,[4] could not bring themselves to attend such a Conference as was proposed. That the Presbyterian suggestions embodied a real compromise, and did not by any means aim at beating the Episcopalians to their knees, is evident enough. It was upon measures for the securing of

[1] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 229.

[2] *Ibid.* part ii. p. 231.

[3] *Ibid.* part ii. p. 232.

[4] *Ibid.* part ii. pp. 242-247; Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (ed. 1862), pp. 27-39.

vital, as distinct from merely formal, piety—upon the obtaining of godly resident ministers in every parish, upon the necessity of real faith in those who partook of the Communion, and the like—that the principal stress was laid. To the set prayers of a Liturgy no objection was taken, though in the existing Prayer Book many things were declared to need change, and it was proposed that a joint committee of Episcopalians and Presbyterians should take the task of revision in hand. It was only in respect of certain ceremonies, such as the use of the sign of the cross in baptism and bowing at the name of Jesus, that total abolition was asked for, while others, such as kneeling at the Holy Table, were to become permissive instead of compulsory. Upon the question of Church government, which might have been deemed so crucial as to threaten an *impasse*, the signatories of the scheme professed themselves ready to accept Archbishop Ussher's plan of twenty years before,[1] this being a plan in which—by increasing the number of suffragan Bishops, by establishing monthly meetings of ministers for purposes of religious enquiry and discipline, by the calling at longer intervals of Diocesan Synods at which the Bishop should with the consent of the suffragans and ministers "conclude all things," and by various other devices —an apparent approximation between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism might be brought about.[2] The scheme left many points indeterminate even in theory; and at the first test of practice many of the elements which it so laboriously joined together would probably have flown incontinently apart. But in any case the thing had no trial; for although the willingness of the Presbyterians to accept it in 1660 put their sincere desire for compromise beyond doubt, the refusal of the Bishops to meet for discussion strangled the whole scheme at its birth. So far, Charles had failed; but, with the hot fit still upon him, and not being disposed to accept the check as final, he tried another and more autocratic way. The Bishops evidently realised what was soon

[1] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. pp. 232-237; Gould, as previous note, pp. 12-21.

[2] "Ussher's scheme" had been drawn up by a committee of the House of Lords in 1641. See Hallam, *Constitutional History of England* (ed. 1854), ii. 115. Baxter reproduces it in *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. pp. 238-240.

to be proved—that by the backing of popular sentiment their position was made strong. They were in that rapidly mounting mood which caused Pepys to say a little later on, "And indeed the Bishops are so high that very few do love them."[1] Loved they may not have been; but they at any rate correctly understood and represented the general desires. But Charles's eyes were not opened yet. Determining to force the issue, he prepared a "Declaration of Indulgence," wherein were embodied most of the points of the settlement suggested by the Presbyterians, showed the draft to Baxter, looked favourably upon some modifications which Baxter and his *confrères* proposed, and then called a meeting of the two ecclesiastical parties at Worcester House.[2] It was at this meeting that the previously-mentioned clause conferring liberty upon "outside" religious bodies was discussed and, as we have seen, objected to by the Presbyterian divines;[3] and it was doubtless the consciousness of having in this very important matter crossed the King's desires that caused Baxter to leave the Conference, as he himself tells us he did, with spirits weighed down.[4] A few days afterwards, however, the King's Declaration was issued to the public; and Baxter, reading it with no expectation but that of having his fears confirmed, discovered to his surprise that, while the obnoxious clause had been dropped, only the original general promise of "liberty to tender consciences" being reproduced from the Breda Declaration, the King's intention of accepting the essential points of the Presbyterian scheme—including the important joint Committee for Prayer-Book revision—still held good.[5] Simultaneously, as a further manifestation of the King's favour to the Presbyterian side, the Bishopric of Hereford was offered to Baxter himself, that of Norwich to Reynolds, and Deaneries to others of the Presbyterian school.[6] Certainly it looked as though

[1] *Diary* (ed. Wheatley, 1904), i. 362.

[2] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. pp. 276-278.

[3] *Supra*, p. 10.

[4] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 278.

[5] *Ibid.* part ii. p. 279. For the "Declaration," see also Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 560-564; or Gould's *Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (ed. 1862), pp. 63-78; or Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle, etc.*, pp. 289-293.

[6] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. pp. 281, 283, 284; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 328.

the compromise for which the Presbyterians had been working had at last a good chance of being established; for although the King's Declaration still required to be legitimised by parliamentary enactment (most of the Presbyterians chosen for ecclesiastical preferment wisely waited, before accepting, for this due ratification of the treaty), the passing by both Houses of a resolution of thanks to the King for his efforts on behalf of ecclesiastical peace seemed to leave little room for doubt that this would soon be done.[1] So, at any rate, a superficial reading of the matter would have run.

But contrary winds were so strong that the vessel which had come within hail of port was driven out into stormy seas again. It speedily became evident that the national temper—determined as it was that both in Church and State the new things must pass away and all things must become old—would permit no such settlement as that pointed to by the Presbyterian desires and by the Declaration of Charles. In fact, before the issue of the Declaration and before there was any question of a law founded thereon, there had been proof enough. Petitions from many of the formerly ejected Episcopalian clergy had poured in, in which petitions it was assumed as a matter of course that re-instatement was only a matter of "ask and have."[2] Some of the clergy, indeed, gauging the situation rightly, had taken matters into their own hands and seized upon the pulpits which had once been theirs, and although this high-handed enforcement of claim had been carried so far as to evoke a Proclamation (based upon a report of Prynne's) to the effect that possession must be obtained by legal process, and not through riot or by force,[3] public opinion had looked on at it all and said that it was well. Parliament could not but be conscious of the speed at which the national pulse was beating, and could not help but play the tune for which the nation called. Its readiness to answer to the general mood

[1] Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle, etc.*, p. 306.

[2] See *State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles II.*, vol. xii., for large numbers (these are summarised in *Calendar of State Papers*, Domestic Series, 1660–1661, pp. 218-236); also, for specimens, see *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*, vii. 104-108.

[3] *Journals of the House of Commons*, viii. 47.

in respect of the throne had been quickly shown in its dealing with an Act of Indemnity covering the cases of those engaged in the late rebellion against Charles the First; for the range of exception had been time upon time enlarged until many besides the actual regicides and those most closely associated with them were marked down for punishments of various degrees up to that of death.[1] In respect of the Church matters had not been quite so simple, the crossing currents of religious and ecclesiastical opinion in the Parliament itself introducing complications not easy to straighten out.[2] Nevertheless, towards autumn significance might have been discerned in an Act which Parliament passed (in September) restoring to their places all the clergy ejected since the Civil War began,[3] the significance being increased by the fact that the Act, in its final form, was far more drastic than it had been at its introduction in the preceding May, if, indeed, its last accomplishment was not almost the converse of its first intention. Under this Act many clergymen of Presbyterian conviction (together, of course, with many of such Independents and Baptists as had contrived to keep an insecure foothold until now) had already been deprived—a memory which must, one would suppose, have hung like a star of evil omen over the heads of the Presbyterians during those negotiations we have just now traced out. Indeed, one can but wonder the more, in face of all this, that Presbyterian optimism remained so largely undisturbed. It was after all only superficially that the prospects of any settlement based upon Charles's Declaration looked bright. An observer who looked all round the position might easily be brought to doubt whether—whatever resolutions of thanks for his efforts the Houses unanimously passed to the King—the Declaration had much or any chance of being transformed into the law of the land.

Proof that it had no chance at all did not tarry long. The Bill which would have enacted the provisions of the Declaration was introduced by Sir Matthew Hale at the

[1] Clarendon's *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), i. 398 ff.

[2] On the religious complexion of this Convention Parliament, see Miss L. F. Brown in the *English Historical Review*, xxii. 51-63.

[3] Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle, etc.*, p. 254.

close of November, and at once thrown out by a majority of nearly thirty votes.[1] There is no reason to suppose that the division represented anything else than the true opinion of the House; for the Convention Parliament had never been favourably inclined to Presbyterianism; and some of the members were careful to explain that, although they had joined in the address of thanks to the King for his Declaration, they had not taken this as in any way binding their hands. But Parliament's native dislike for the Bill found itself reinforced, if it needed reinforcement, by the fact that the King's officers and counsellors opposed the very Bill which might be supposed to embody the King's own desires (Sir William Morrice, Secretary of State, for instance, indicating an unmistakable wish that the Bill should fail[2]), and this actually by the King's own commands. That Charles took measures to fan the flame of Parliamentary hostility to the Bill was practically confessed by Clarendon;[3] while from a statement made by Sir Edward Nicholas, another State Secretary, implying anything but grief on the writer's part because the Bill had been thrown out,[4] we may infer that its defeat excited in the King nothing but delight. And, strange as it may have seemed to people at the time to find the King's ministers setting themselves against the passing of the King's wishes into law, and countenanced in doing so by the King himself, the mystery is easily explained. The King's advisers, for the most part, understood the national spirit aright. A man like Clarendon, at any rate, was not easily to be deceived. Some of the King's friends, before his actual return, had urged upon their royal master (sometimes for purely political reasons, not realising that what they urged on Charles to do in the way of dissimulation he was more than ready to do with his whole heart) that course of general toleration, including toleration for the Romanists, to which he was himself so strongly inclined.[5]

[1] Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle, etc.*, p. 314.

[2] *Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England*, xxiii. 28, 29. Kennett (*A Register and Chronicle, etc.*, p. 314) mentions the fact, but does not give the name.

[3] Lister's *Life of Clarendon*, ii. 218.

[4] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), p. 404.

[5] For an example, see an anonymous letter given in Thurloe's *Collection of State Papers* (ed. Birch), vii. 873: "By doing this you will secure yourself

But, whatever the idea of these counsellors may have been, Clarendon, so soon as he stepped into the centre of things, perceived that not by parliamentary enactments could such a programme be carried out. He had, in point of fact, no desire that it should be carried out at all, for Clarendon was no favourer of the toleration idea. But in any case, he was convinced of the impracticability of the King's schemes. This conviction, communicated by Clarendon from his own mind to that of Charles, wakened in the King a dislike for parliamentary interference of any kind with the religious question—so that, as Clarendon himself informs us, the King desired no more than that they (the Parliament) should do nothing, being sure that in a little time he should himself do the work best.[1] Yet, when the negotiations between Charles and the Presbyterians had reached to the point of the Declaration, the legalising of the latter by Parliament inevitably presented itself as the next step. And if the King had been able to bring the Presbyterians round to his standpoint—had they shown willingness to accept the full "toleration" clause on which his heart was set—the prospect of a struggle in Parliament might have been faced with better cheer. The projected scheme could then have been at least represented as a means of satisfying one of the two religious sections which were at war. But the Presbyterian refusal handicapped the King too heavily. There was no chance of forcing from Parliament a measure which both the Presbyterians and the Commons disliked. As things were, Charles had no hope, by the time Parliament attacked the question, that through Parliament he could get his way. His interest, consequently, died, or, rather, became hostile: he fell back upon his earlier idea "that in a little time he should himself do the work best"; and, although compelled as it were to dangle the matter before the eyes of Parliament, he took care that Parliament should get no real hold. The defeat of Sir Matthew Hale's Bill, so disappointing to the Presbyterians, probably so bewildering to some in the House itself, was just what would have been expected if

against the Presbyterians and Sectaries, by equally posing them with others of contrary judgments."

[1] Clarendon's *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), i. 408.

all the forces at work in the minds of the nation, of the King's advisers, and of the King himself, had been accurately known and reckoned up.

Close upon the throwing out of Sir Matthew Hale's Bill followed the dissolution of the Convention Parliament, its successor meeting in May of 1661. In the interval, loyalism (and loyalism, be it always remembered, meant loyalism in respect of the older Church as well as in respect of the throne) went on from strength to strength; and there were multiplied signs that Presbyterian prospects had passed their zenith and were now darkening fast. The consecration of the new Bishops in October and December 1660[1] might not in itself have been very significant, since Episcopacy—modified, indeed, but Episcopacy still—lay within the bounds of Presbyterian willingness; but the fact that Sancroft, the preacher at the second ceremony, made a special point of denouncing the conception of "a consistory of Presbyters, or a bench of elders," and spoke of "our Holy Mother, the Church, standing up from the dust and ruins in which she sat so long,"[2] was ominous as showing to what height the confidence of the Episcopalians had grown. The outbreak of the Fifth-Monarchy men under Venner in January 1661[3] furnished additional reasons, or at least additional excuses, for acting on the principle that all dissidents in religion must be also rebels against the King; so that although the Proclamation which followed immediately after the disturbance bore more particularly upon other Nonconformists,[4] the Presbyterians might also well feel that another weight telling against them had been flung into the scale. There remained, it is true, the promised Committee of Presbyterians and Episcopalians for the joint revision of the Book of Common Prayer. But if the Presbyterians, during the months between the dissolution of the Convention Parliament and the gathering of the next, sustained themselves upon hopes of what the Commission might

[1] Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle Ecclesiastical and Civil*, pp. 296, 323, 324.

[2] D'Oyly, *Life of Sancroft*, ii. 321, 346.

[3] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 278, 279; Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle Ecclesiastical and Civil*, pp. 355, 356.

[4] It branded as seditious all religious meetings other than those held in parish churches. See Kennett, as previous note, pp. 357, 358; or Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 564, 565.

achieve, they were speedily undeceived. Meeting on April 15, the Commission—known as the "Savoy Conference," since it was in the Savoy Palace of Henry VII. that its members gathered—ended its labours in July.[1] It might as well never have met. All the old points were traversed, and some new ones: the old controversies as to free prayer, as to the Communion Service, as to the phrases which might be suspected of a possible Romanist interpretation, and the rest, were, either in their familiar or in some slightly varied form, raked over once again: Baxter himself prepared different forms of service—for the Lord's Day, for the Lord's Supper, for Baptism, for almost every occasion that could arise—which were proposed in whole or partial substitution for those already existing; but in the end, the attitude of the Bishops was the chief factor in rendering the whole thing useless; and the Commission broke up with all the ends of the matter still hanging loose. Whether, had the Bishops been more accommodating, a more positive result would have been reached, it is impossible to say. It must be confessed that the Presbyterians, on their side (this at any rate is the impression received by many who read the record open-mindedly to-day), seem to have been considerably more aggressive than at the Worcester House Conference of the previous year; and the extensive nature of Baxter's suggested "substitutions" might in any case have caused countenances on the other side to fall. But evidently the Bishops took up a *non possumus* attitude from the first. It is probably not too much to say that "they had no wish to keep the Puritans in the Church."[2] Later on, when on the passing of the Act of Uniformity the Earl of Manchester expressed a fear that owing to its severity the dissident clergy would not conform, Sheldon made the significant remark, "I am afraid they will."[3] At any rate, the Bishops looked upon the Presbyterians as claimants who had all the

[1] The fullest account of the Conference (though of course given distinctly from the Presbyterian side) is Baxter's own in *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. pp. 305-363. See also Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 159-186.

[2] Ryle, *Facts and Men*, p. 268.

[3] So Bates says in his funeral sermon on Baxter (*Works*, ed. 1815, iv. 330). In Calamy's *Nonconformists' Memorial* (ed. Palmer), i. 33, a dignitary of the Church is reported to have said, after the passing of the Act, that if so many had been expected to conform, the Act would have been made "straiter."

presumptive right and justice of the matter against them, and who must, if they desired any concession, make out an absolutely overwhelming case. The Conference was bound to fail. Indeed, it may be as well to say at this point that the entire movement for Comprehension was a movement which in the nature of things could have but one end. The theory of the Church of England, from Elizabeth's days onward, had been based upon the idea that uniformity must prevail throughout the whole ecclesiastical system down to the smallest detail; and this being so, the efforts of the Presbyterians in the time of the second Charles, like the efforts of the Puritans before them, were really foredoomed. To have admitted either the earlier Puritan or the later Presbyterian contention would have been like affirming that a thing could both be and not be at the same time. One need have no dispute with the Church of England author who says of the ejectments of 1662, "The loss of so many good men was grievous, but now that the mists of controversy have cleared away, it is impossible to regard it as other than inevitable."[1] But quite apart from this, the attitude of the Bishops would have rendered the Conference abortive, even though no fundamental incompatibility between the positions of the participants had existed. It was bound to fail. And while any last hopes founded upon it were dying, the new Parliament was hot and eager upon its work.

From the country at large members animated by perfervid loyalty were sent up in predominant numbers to the House. London, whence the leaven of new political and religious views had been by no means purged away, showed a different colour from that which most of the constituencies wore; and, greatly to the disgust of not a few, returned the non-royalist candidates with something like acclaim.[2] But

[1] Hutton, *The English Church from the Accession of Charles I. to the Death of Anne*, p. 192.

[2] For various opinions on the election, see *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), pp. 535-550. See also some comments in Pepys's *Diary* (ed. Wheatley, 1904), i. 362; also *The Loyal Subject's Lamentation for London's Perverseness in the Malignant Choice of some Rotten Members, on Tuesday, the 19th of March, 1661* (*Thomason Tracts*, British Museum). In sixty-two lines of abusive rhyme the indignant author laments that

> The city vermin in Guild Hall did cry,
> Both Independent and Presbytery.

when the final make-up of the Commons had been accomplished, supremacy had passed unmistakably into the hands of those anxious to restore the things that had been broken down. The first restoration was that of the Bishops to the Upper House,[1] though there had been a significant preliminary in the public burning of the "Solemn League and Covenant," carried out by London's common executioner at Parliamentary command.[2] The ecclesiastical Courts abolished in the reign of the first Charles (though not the Court of High Commission) were once again set up,[3] while in respect of Corporations an Act provided that municipal officials, from the Mayor downwards, must take the oath of supremacy, repudiate the Covenant, and swear that under no conditions could it be lawful to bear arms against the King. It was also required that within not more than a year before entering office they should have taken the Lord's Supper according to Church of England rites.[4] But it was in the famous Act of Uniformity that the chief and decisive movement was made. Meeting, as we have seen, in May of 1661, the Commons were so quickly ready with their Act that the 29th of June saw its introduction and the 9th of July saw it through. It will be remembered that the joint Commission of Episcopalians and Presbyterians did not conclude its vain attempt to find a *modus vivendi* in regard to the Book of Common Prayer until July,[5] so that the Commons passed a Bill for securing uniformity of public worship before they knew what the prescribed form of public worship was going to be. Even this does not give the full measure of unseemly haste. On the failure of the Commission, the task of Prayer-Book Revision passed into Convocation's hands ;[6] but it was

[1] Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle Ecclesiastical and Civil*, p. 509. Pepys writes (*Diary*, ed. Wheatley, 1904, ii. 46) : "This day, I hear, the Parliament have ordered a bill to be brought in for restoring the Bishops to the House of Lords ; which they had not done so soon but to spite Mr. Prin (Prynne), who is every day so bitter against them in his discourse in the House."

[2] Kennett, as previous note, p. 450. *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), p. 595. [3] Kennett, as former note, p. 510.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 583. Bate (*The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, p. 22) quotes from the municipal records of Liverpool some samples of the working of the Act in that city. [5] *Supra*, p. 22.

[6] Under a letter from the King, who, however, reserved to himself the right of accepting or rejecting any alterations proposed. *State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles II.*, xliii. 40.

not, in fact, until December that Convocation set its seal to the new Book of Common Prayer; so that the passing of the Act of Uniformity through the Commons antedated by more than five months the birth of the system it was to make authoritative. The impatience of the Lower House was shown, moreover, in its frequent application of the spur to the House above. The Lords, though the Bill was sent up to them on the day after the Commons had passed it, preferred to walk by sight rather than by faith, and deferred consideration of the measure till Convocation's work was done. Even when consideration commenced (in January 1662) its movement was too slow to satisfy the Commons' zeal; and repeatedly did the Commons urge the too laggard Lords to quicken their pace and put the Bill through its final stage. The Lords were, indeed, disposed throughout to be less fanatical upon the matter of uniformity than the Lower House: they would, for instance, have released schoolmasters from the pressure of the Act, and made it bear upon the beneficed clergy only: they endeavoured to insert in the body of the Bill various amendments whereby its stringency would have been relieved; and above all, they would have provided compensation, for those who could not conform, to the extent of a fifth of the income yielded by the livings they gave up.[1] So marked was the difference between the Upper and the Lower Houses that some Presbyterian ministers in Suffolk are said to have dubbed the House of Lords the "House of the Lord," and to have prayed for it under that flattering name.[2] But the Lords could make no effectual resistance to the Commons; and in the end the Bill provided for the obtaining of the full pound of flesh which the Lower House so earnestly coveted. Even from Charles himself the Commons would take no hints. The King—evidently pursuing his policy of reserving a dispensing power in his own hands—persuaded the Lords to insert a clause which would have allowed a clergyman who obtained royal permission to discard the surplice and omit

[1] See on the whole proceedings in Parliament, Swainson, *Parliamentary History of the Act of Uniformity*. Swainson, however, rather curiously refuses to give the Lords much credit for lenient intentions.

[2] Quoted (from *Nickleton MSS. Letter Book*) in Cosin's *Correspondence* (Surtees Society), ii., note on p. xviii.

the sign of the cross.[1] The Lower House would give no moment's ear to any proposal of the kind. The Commons knew well that the flowing tide was with them, and would bear them home. So it proved. May 19, 1662, found the King giving his royal assent to an Act of Uniformity which had been introduced into the Commons eleven months earlier and passed there in a few days, whose discussion had begun in the Lords in January and continued for four months, but whose final shape—notwithstanding both the haste with which the Commons had framed it and the anxious deliberation with which the Lords had scanned its provisions—was in all essentials that which from the commencement the Commons had intended it to be.

The provisions and the consequences of the Act of Uniformity are well known. As to its provisions, it ordained that worship everywhere must be conducted by the officiating clergyman strictly in accordance with the newly issued Book of Common Prayer, requiring also that every minister already in possession should, not later than August 24 (St. Bartholomew's Day) publicly declare his "unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in" the said Book,[2] and that every minister subsequently appointed should make a similar declaration within two months: it made episcopal ordination compulsory upon all the clergy, fixing as the latest date for obtaining it that same fateful one given before, and ordering deprivation to ensue if the condition had not by that time been fulfilled; it called upon every holder of an ecclesiastical or scholastic post, in Church, University, or School, to sign an admission that it could under no circumstances be lawful to war against the King, and that the Covenant was utterly and for ever abjured; while any person coming under this latter clause omitting to obey it and nevertheless persisting in his work was to be subjected to imprisonment or fine or both.[3]

[1] *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*, vii. 162, 163; *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1661–1662), p. 324.

[2] This declaration was altered in 1865 to one of general assent to the Articles, Prayer-Book, and Ordination service, coupled with a promise not to use any other than the Prayer-Book forms, "except so far as shall be ordained by lawful authority."

[3] The Act is in Gould's *Documents relating to the Settlement of The Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (ed. 1862), pp. 386-404.

As to the consequences of the Act, they are summed up in the statement that when St. Bartholomew's Day had come and gone, close upon two thousand ministers had faced their flocks for the last time. Of these a certain number, though only a small one, ultimately conformed and went back. Some lacked resolution to endure the fire into which they fell. And there must have been at least a small contingent in like case with Kidder, Vicar of Stanground, Huntingdonshire, who, having had no opportunity of seeing the new Prayer-Book by reason of the lateness of its publication, and having refused to subscribe in the dark, found himself able afterwards to submit.[1] But not much deduction is required. The work of purging the Church was, from the Episcopalian point of view, well and truly done. Here and there a clergyman contrived, owing to special circumstances or to special warmth of local favour, to keep his pulpit without conformity to the new law.[2] A small number obtained chaplaincies in prisons or hospitals.[3] But the fortunate ones were very few. Some professions of conformity, it may also be suspected, were probably made merely for the purpose of escaping ejectment, and with an insincerity which did not propose to observe them afterwards; for within two years of the passing of the Act of Uniformity we find charges launched against certain clergymen which can only mean that these latter broke the rules they had avowed to keep:[4] at Bristol so late as 1677 a prebendary, Samuel Crossman, is accused of possessing "a Presbyterian hypocritical heart";[5] while yet later—after 1688—South complains in Westminster Abbey that disorder in respect of clerical dress and

[1] See Kidder's *Autobiography* in Cassan's *Lives of the Bishops of Bath and Wells*, ii. 111. Kidder became a Bishop in the time of William the Third, and was, with his wife, killed by the falling upon them of the episcopal palace walls in the great storm of 1703 (Cassan, as cited, ii. 163).

[2] These cases seem to have occurred chiefly, though not exclusively, in the north. For some instances, see Heywood's *Works*, i. 545; Halley, *Lancashire, Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, ii. 146-163; Perry, *History of the English Church from the Accession of Henry VIII. till the Silencing of Convocation in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 514.

[3] Kennett (*A Register and Chronicle, etc.*, pp. 888 ff.) gives a long list of ejected ministers who obtained minor appointments of some kind or other. But many of these so-called appointments must have been practically worthless.

[4] *Mystery and Iniquity of Nonconformity.* Quoted by Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 492.

[5] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1677–1678), pp. 351-354.

observation of prescribed rules is still rife.[1] It should also be said that a considerable number of both the clergy and laity within the Established Church regretted the passing of the Act of Uniformity. The time was at hand when the doctrine of toleration was to be pressed from the philosophical rather than from the specifically religious quarter.[2] The idea of it was beginning if not to permeate, at any rate to tinge, the air; and some who were themselves on the Episcopal side in the Church controversy were willing, in respect of their nonconforming neighbours, to adopt a policy of live and let live. It is noteworthy that the rise of the Latitudinarian school in the Church of England—a school comprising thinkers whose theology was broad rather than warm, calmly philosophical rather than religiously enthusiastic, and who held the Episcopalian system to be expedient rather than indispensable—the school to which men like Whichcot, More, and Tillotson belonged—dates from the latter half of the seventeenth century.[3] Indeed, in the very year of the Act of Uniformity, Stillingfleet, inspired in his youth by a liberalism which advancing age and ecclesiastical promotion did somewhat impair but could not destroy, republished a plea for moderation written three years before.[4] But though the spirit in these men might be willing, power wherewith to perform what they would they could not find; and any real mitigation of the pressure upon Nonconformity it was not in them to bring about. On the whole, it may be repeated, the work of purging the Church was, from the Episcopalian point of view, well and truly done. The farewells of St. Bartholomew's Day marked, not the end of a skirmish, but the close of a campaign. Yet later readings

[1] Quoted in Molesworth's *The Church of England from 1660*, pp. 4, 5.

[2] See Index, "Toleration, growth of general idea."

[3] On the Latitudinarian or Cambridge school, consult Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the 17th Century*; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 331 ff. Burnet speaks of the Latitudinarians as having saved the Church from losing "her esteem over the nation." An allusion to them is in Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 386. There is a contemporary account in *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude Men*, by S. P. (perhaps Bishop Simon Patrick). The writer of this pamphlet champions them, but rather curiously defends them against the charge of supporting liberty of conscience.

[4] *Irenicum: A Weapon-salve for the Church's Wound.* Stillingfleet himself sheltered some of the ministers ejected under the Act.

of the history, while admitting the completeness of the ejected ministers' defeat, emphasise the victory of truth in their consciences rather than the triumph of those who drove them out, and hold this indeed to be far the greater victory of the two. The renunciation these men made stands out as one of the really great heroisms of history; for it meant more than a passage from a ministry within the Established Church to a ministry outside it: it meant a passage from a ministry within the Established Church to silence (unless, indeed, the risk of severe penalties were faced), and for many, consequently, a passage from security to poverty often extreme. Baxter tells us something of the straits to which not a few were reduced;[1] and it is recorded that Dr. Cornelius Burgess, whose income had been a thousand pounds a year, found that if he did not want to starve, there was nothing for it but to beg.[2] It is obvious that men who for conscience sake accepted a prospect so wreathed in clouds and darkness must have been morally at least, whatever they may have been intellectually, among the greatest and best. "Sober, vigilant, and industrious," some of them were termed a little later by the Earl of Peterborough;[3] and those who read the records of the ejected[4] will perceive that much more than this could in many cases be said.[5] And enough of their sayings and doings on the memorable 17th of

[1] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. pp. 385, 386.

[2] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 65. The statement is contained in a long letter—perhaps by Hooke—written to Davenport at Boston, in America, and containing many particulars as to the working of the Act.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 496.

[4] See chiefly Calamy's *Nonconformists' Memorial* (ed. Palmer).

[5] Nor shall the eternal roll of praise reject
Those unconforming; whom one rigorous day
Drives from their cures, a voluntary prey
To poverty, and grief, and disrespect,
And some to want—as if by tempests wrecked
On a wild coast; how destitute! did they
Feel not that conscience never can betray,
That peace of mind is virtue's sure effect.
Their altars they forego, their homes they quit,
Fields which they love, and paths they daily trod,
And cast the future upon Providence;
As men the dictate of whose inward sense
Outweighs the world; whom self-deceiving wit
Lures not from what they deem the cause of God.
WORDSWORTH: *Clerical Integrity* (*Ecclesiastical Sketches*).

August[1] has come down to us to indicate the calm and yet serious spirit with which they had weighed the matter, the lofty resignation with which they entered upon the one inevitable way. Evelyn certainly remarks that strong guards were posted in the City on the following Wednesday because disturbances were anticipated in connection with the ejectments;[2] but there is nowhere any sign that such fears had good ground, or that in the issue they proved anything but false. Pepys, who heard Bates's farewell sermon at St. Dunstan's, admits that the preacher displayed a temper of fine order;[3] and in many discourses which have been preserved[4] it is evident that with a noble sorrow, rather than with any petty bitterness, did the majority of the dismissed ministers bend before the storm. Nor can it have been with much idea that their weeping would endure but for a night, and that soon their morning joy would come, that they went out. They must have felt that on the balance of probabilities this was, as has been said, the end of the campaign. About their doom there hung an air of finality not to be ignored. They could hardly have had any real hope (and this may be said notwithstanding that more than one abortive attempt, or half attempt, at Comprehension was destined to be made in the future[5]) that their scheme of a Presbyterian-Episcopal Church of England could ever be revived with any chance of success, however they may have tried to persuade themselves that some little hope remained. Presbyterianism's descent from the high exclusiveness of its earliest period to the somewhat broader platform occupied by its representatives in Restoration days, had been made absolutely in vain. The Presbyterian strategy had failed, and nothing less than total defeat had come.

It is, indeed, as essentially a Presbyterian defeat that the passing of the Act of Uniformity stands out. True, a certain number of Congregationalist and Baptist ministers

[1] The 24th was the day appointed for the reading of the Declaration; but, with a few exceptions, those ministers who did not mean to read it naturally concluded their ministry on the previous Sunday.

[2] *Diary and Correspondence* (ed. Bray), i. 367.

[3] *Diary* (ed. Wheatley, 1904), ii. 307-309.

[4] See *Farewell Sermons of some of the most eminent of the Nonconformist Ministers delivered at the period of their ejectment* (ed. 1816).

[5] For these, consult the Index at "Comprehension."

kept their places in the Church up to the great catastrophe, and left only when the Presbyterians left. But the total number, even when pushed to the highest reasonable estimate, remains relatively small.[1] The Act of 1660 had already dismissed very many;[2] and the mounting heat of hatred for Independency must have greatly affected the rest, partly by making their position intrinsically untenable, and partly by causing them, even if they were otherwise undisturbed, to feel that they could scarcely remain within their sheltered places when their "outside" brethren were being hunted out and harried as we shall soon find that they were. An essential fact, also, to be taken into the reckoning when we are considering the exact significance of the Act of Uniformity is this—that if it had not been passed, the Congregational and Baptist ministers holding parish pulpits would have had to go. In the Comprehension scheme, as discussed between the Presbyterians and the Episcopalians, no niche was (or indeed could have been) arranged for—none was even proposed—into which they were to fit: the few that kept their places were allowed to do so only because things were in a transition state, and that instalment of the ultimate settlement which their expulsion would have constituted was simply postponed, although or because it was held inevitable, until the whole settlement scheme was cut and dried. As was stated at the commencement of this section, it was not the failure of the Presbyterian plan of Comprehension that inaugurated or rendered inevitable Nonconformity's struggle for existence. That would in any case have had to come. The driving of the Presbyterians into union with an "outside" Nonconformity which, even without the Act, would have had to fight for its life, was the only result which the Act of Uniformity really brought about; and it is to Presbyterian history, therefore, that the Act of Uniformity and its con-

[1] There has at times been a good deal of misconception on this point. For instance, Ivimey's list of Baptist ministers expelled in 1662 (*History of the English Baptists*, i. 328, 329) includes the name of Henry Jessey, who is known to have been turned out at an earlier date (*infra*, p. 67). Congregational and Baptist ministers must have been passing out of the Church from the moment of Charles's return; and the majority of those who had held livings under the Cromwellian settlement must have lost or surrendered them long before the Act of Uniformity became law.

[2] *Supra*, p. 18.

sequent expulsions really belong, its passing being essentially a Presbyterian defeat. To a wider historic view, of course, it is more than this, and marks, besides, the final collapse of that Nonconformist movement within the Church of England which, as we saw, began in Elizabeth's days. How that movement—including within itself, as it did, a combination of Puritan and Presbyterian elements—how that movement on its strictly Puritan side had failed at an earlier stage, has been previously set down.[1] Now, in 1662, the second or Presbyterian element in "internal Nonconformity" came in turn to its final hour; so that the English Church stood before the world with but one colour upon its robes, every piece that had shown differently having either been dyed to uniformity or torn off and cast away if it refused to take the appointed hue. This is the significance of the event for the observer who, throwing his glance from the great event of 1662 over the sweep of time gone by, seeks to light upon the beginning of that process whereof the event itself was the close. With the Act of Uniformity, Nonconformity within the Church reached its term. When, however, we are taking into our reckoning only the narrower and more immediate significance of the Act, considering it merely in and for itself, we have to say that its passing was essentially a Presbyterian defeat—that is it was, if not exclusively, at any rate principally, an event in the history of Presbyterianism, rather than in the history of Nonconformist bodies like the Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers, who had taken no part in the earlier ecclesiastical negotiations of Charles's reign, and who, by their very principles, could have little or no interest in the result. It is somewhat of a mis-reading of things to look upon the year 1662 as if it were a date of superlative importance to Nonconformity, for example, of the Independent type, to any Nonconformity that was fundamentally "separatist"—for Nonconformity, that is, which was (or ought to have been) already outside the Established Church. It was hardly that. The importance of the date for "external" Nonconformity lay simply in this—that it marked the swelling of that external Nonconformity's numbers by the

[1] Vol. I. Book II. Chapter II.

addition of many who had belonged to "internal" Non-conformity before. It was certainly not the birth-date of Independency or of Churches more or less kindred with Independency,[1] nor one that could be called the date of their re-birth or of their coming of age, nor one that marked any fresh departure or any striking reassertion of principle on their part, nor, it may be added, a date that signalised any change in their status before the law. So far as this last-named point is concerned, the Act of Uniformity (for although it takes no special cognisance of Separatist assemblies, the Act, in declaring as its "intent" "that every Person within this Realm may certainly know the Rule to which he is to conform in Public Worship,"[2] shows that it did not contemplate the leaving of any vacant spaces on which Separatist assemblies might find room) merely repeated and ratified against outside bodies a charge of illegality under which they already lay. It thrust upon them the strain and stress of no conflict which, apart from the Act, they would not have had to endure. All the Separatist Churches, indeed, had had their position and their fate brought home to them from the moment at which Charles came back: it was assumed (and acted upon) at once that any legislation which had been made for their relief was, by and under the Restoration, *ipso facto* annulled: a definite denunciation of their assemblies had been pronounced in the Proclamation of 1661;[3] and, as we shall presently see,[4] they had suffered many things even while the negotiations for Episcopal-Presbyterian Comprehension

[1] The reference is not to single Independent congregations. 1662 was the birth-date of a good many of these. (See, for instance, *Congregational Year Book*. And as noted on p. 129, Presbyterian gatherings which could no longer be sheltered within the Established Church would naturally become Independent in a manner.) The reference is to Churches in the larger sense of denominations.

[2] Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (ed. 1862), p. 388. Perhaps, indeed, the reference in the Act to persons who "following their own sensuality, and living without knowledge, and due fear of God, do wilfully and schismatically abstain and refuse to come to their parish churches" (*ibid.* p. 386) may have Separatist religious gatherings in view. It certainly cannot be justly said that "those who left her (the Church) for conscience sake were free to teach and worship as they willed" (Hutton, *The English Church from the Accession of Charles I. to the Death of Anne*, p. 192). See Amos, *The English Constitution in the Time of Charles the Second*, p. 88.

[3] *Supra*, p. 21.

[4] *Infra*, pp. 41-45.

had been going on. The Act of Uniformity simply left them as they were. Primarily, it is to the history of Presbyterianism, rather than to the history of other Nonconformist bodies, that the Act belongs.

Nevertheless, the union of Nonconformity from within the Established Church and Nonconformity outside was not without its effect upon the last-named—upon Independency, and specially upon Independency in its Congregational branch, it should be added, most of all; and though it was primarily upon the Presbyterians that the Act of Uniformity told, it thus came, through the union which it forced, to tell upon the Independents too. And it may be well to note at once, leaving expansion of the point for a later stage, that for our study of the Nonconformist spirit, and of the degree of its representation in concrete Nonconformity, this fact has weight. The Presbyterians, now expelled, and the Independents, already outside, had by force of circumstances to share a common fate. In the fact of severance from the Church of England they were so far made one. Also—though we shall have to note this point again [1]—the ejected Presbyterian ministers and their flocks, finding it (as they would find it) impossible to set up the complete machinery of the Presbyterian scheme, would, however strongly they might in conviction be Presbyterian still, approximate more and more in appearance and superficial feature to the Independent model (more particularly to the Congregational model, since the special doctrine of the Baptists would serve to mark them off), each Church maintaining itself in more or less of isolation from the rest; and thus, in point of fact, came about that gradual mutual approach of Presbyterianism and Congregational Independency which had its full fruition in the actual, and temporarily successful, attempt at union made after the Toleration Act of 1689.[2] But we have seen before [3] that the Nonconformist spirit, which makes organisation depend upon life, is not the spirit whereby Presbyterianism, with its insistence upon one particular form of organisation as of supreme, if not almost exclusive, validity, can be said to be animated; and though by 1662 Presbyterianism had, by

[1] *Infra*, p. 129. [2] *Infra*, pp. 160 ff.
[3] Vol. I. pp. 212, 213, 267.

sheer compulsion of circumstances, put off much of the haughty bearing which had originally marked it, it was still in the idea of a specially valid organisation (however far that organisation might, for reasons of expediency, consent to waive its rights) that its Church-idea found its point of start. We have seen also[1] that Independency, though to some extent a witness to the Nonconformist ideal, had suffered its witness to be dimmed. What we have, therefore, in the years subsequent to the Act of Uniformity, is a practical union between Churches which only imperfectly represent the Nonconformist spirit and Churches which do not represent it at all; and from this condition of things it was inevitable that some results, still further affecting the embodiment of the Nonconformist spirit in the actual and concrete religious life of the land, should flow. For the moment, we need do no more than note that such results must in the nature of things be looked for, and prepare ourselves to watch for their signs. Perhaps for the historian of the fortunes of the true Nonconformist ideal, the most important thing about the Act of Uniformity of 1662 is the fact that it linked together a Presbyterianism only superficially and by accident Nonconformist and an Independency which, though essentially and truly Nonconformist, had already fallen in no small measure from its earliest high estate.

SECTION 2

Charles's Struggle for Dispensing Power

1662–1672

AUTHORITIES.—Chiefly as for Section 1, though some of the books there mentioned do not cover the whole period now to be dealt with. The special denominational *Histories* referred to in the foot-notes should, in addition, be consulted for particulars relating to the various Churches concerned. *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, by Frank Bate, which is often referred to in the section, is an invaluable monograph.

For ten years after the passing of the Act of Uniformity Charles was engaged in an attempt to obtain the power of abrogating it in such cases as he might select, his ultimate

[1] Vol. I. pp. 401-403.

desire being to use the power on Romanism's behalf. More than this, he was engaged in an attempt to obtain for his exercise of this same power the sanction of law; and it was from the hands of Parliament that he wished the power to be passed over to his own. Whether Parliament made the desired transference of authority with full consciousness of what it was doing and with open eyes, or whether it did so under cover of an arrangement whose consequences in the way of such a transference Parliament itself did not foresee, was immaterial. So long as the transference were made Charles did not care. His original wish to keep the whole matter of religious settlement in his own hands we have already noted: we have noted also (during our survey of the negotiations between the King and the Presbyterian leaders) how it was only the cherished possibility of including in the terms of settlement a clause under which Romanists, as well as others, would have obtained a loosening of their bonds that induced Charles to let the matter go before Parliament at all; and we have noted finally how, when the Presbyterians, discerning the King's *arrière pensée* in favour of Roman Catholicism, refused to become his tools, the King pronounced a ban against the schism which, as was supposed, he had come to bless.[1] From his temporary willingness to let a parliamentary settlement go through, Charles had returned upon his fundamental idea "that in a little time he should himself do the work best." But the energy with which Parliament, after the failure of the Comprehension scheme, took religious affairs in hand, the vigour with which it hustled one wayward and wandering element of the situation after another, each to its place, till the crowning order was given in the Act of 1662, showed Charles that the straight and direct road to the position of Dictator was closed. By a moment's flash of defiance he did indeed, even after the Act of Uniformity was law, seek to break through to that road again, and to perform the great stroke which he actually dared in 1672—only, however, to realise at once the uselessness of the attempt.[2] Yet another route might perchance be found. The Parliament might be induced to think that if it only surrendered its

[1] *Supra*, p. 20. [2] *Infra*, pp. 48-51.

weapons with a sufficient flourish, this was much the same thing as using them, and might be content with such an assertion of its power as is implied in the formal transference of that power to the royal hands; or, if that proved impossible, the weapons might be slipped from Parliament's hands to the hands of the King while Parliament was looking the other way. It was not, one would suppose, a very promising idea, for it assumed on Parliament's part either a very foolish blindness or a very sudden change of mood. But Charles, notwithstanding his astuteness in some directions, was possessed by that facile optimism, that readiness to assume that the balance of chances must be in their favour, and that the opposition of fate and circumstances can be no more than a passing phase, which inheres in all natures of his indolent type; and for the time being the bauble shone like gold. This, at any rate, was the King's plan from 1662 to the day, ten years later, when, with sudden recognition of its failure, he rose up to fling the Declaration of Indulgence defiantly forth from the royal will. He would somehow persuade Parliament to grant him the dispensing power which he longed for but could not simply snatch. It is true that more than once, while the endeavour persisted, Charles personally interfered to some extent with the operation of the existing laws, as if in anticipation of the liberty of action he hoped to win; but these incidents were no more than sporadic, parenthetic, and incidental, and led besides to quite insignificant and quite temporary results. It was upon wresting from Parliament a licence to over-ride Parliament, upon persuading Parliament to commit legislative suicide so far as its ultimate control over religious affairs was concerned, that through the years of this decade Charles's ambition was set.

Naturally Parliament resisted; and equally naturally, Parliament resented; and it is the progress of the ten years' struggle between the pertinacious King and the resisting and resenting Parliament that we have now to follow for a while. We have to note the King's various attempts to get his will —how Parliament would have none of them—how, after defeating this attempt and that, Parliament pressed still more hardly (partly, it may be supposed, by way of revenge

or punishment for the attempt just made, and partly by way of guarding against any further attempt the King might still be disposed to make) upon that Nonconformity which the King was for his own ends inclined to favour—and how in the end, baffled by Parliament's ceaseless vigilance, the King made an effort (though this also was to be beaten in its turn) to effect by a sudden surprise exercise of his prerogative what he could not effect by constitutional means. We have to watch the various episodes of the conflict, what may be called the successive rounds of the fight—to see how immediately after the passing of the Act of Uniformity a first endeavour at its practical abrogation was made, to which endeavour the Conventicle Act and the Five Mile Act were the reply—how upon Clarendon's fall a second vain effort was made upon similar though slightly disguised lines (this was the attempt, before alluded to, at getting Parliament to shut its eyes while the shuffle of ultimate authority was conjured through) the second Conventicle Act being passed for Parliament's sharp retort—how thereafter the Declaration of Indulgence, the striking out from the King of a lightning-flash of autocratic temper which could do no more than pass from side to side of the horizon and die, was issued in 1672 only to be cancelled again at Parliament's insistent demand. The steady heightening of Parliament's anger under the King's repeated endeavours to make it do his will and under his interferences, so pathetic in their almost complete futility, with the execution of the laws, we shall have to note, as also the fact that in its stubborn resistance to the King's demands the Parliament truly represented the national mood. Yet, as to this last-named point, we shall have to remind ourselves, also (in order that we may understand an apparent inconsistency with its former action in the favourable consideration accorded by Parliament to a relieving Bill after the withdrawal of the Indulgence had been compelled [1]) that throughout the decade a liking for the idea, or at any rate for the theory, of toleration was spreading more or less widely over the land, and that it was an established suspicion of treasonableness in Nonconformity and a growing suspicion of Romanism in the King which

[1] *Infra*, pp. 81, 82.

hindered that liking from working itself out to practical results. These are the dim outlines of the incidents we can see advancing to meet us as we go forward; and these phrases may be taken as the index-phrases to the succession of events we have now to pass in review.

But before taking up the thread of the decade's events, we must for a moment look back. We have hitherto followed the fortunes of the Presbyterians who, notwithstanding their desire for a comprehensive Church of England in which they and the Episcopalians might alike find room, were compelled in 1662 to become involuntary exiles from the established system, so joining those religious associations which were already, but of their own free choice, outside the Church's gates. It is necessary to survey briefly the recent fortunes of these "outside" associations—Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, and the rest—up to the time when the expelled Presbyterians came to swell the "outside" ranks. It was at the return of Charles that we saw them last; and they were trembling then—with more than sufficient reason, as the future was to prove—for what Charles's return might mean.[1] With Charles once upon the throne, disaster was upon them in a flood. Against the Independents the imputation of disloyalty might plausibly be maintained; while the Quakers were still in the eyes of most people the same vexatious disturbers of the public peace that they had always been. The hands of the Independents had, as was constantly repeated in one form or another, dragged the first Charles to the scaffold and were stained with the royal martyr's blood; and the nation could not forget or forgive. The Independent leaders, in identifying themselves and their cause so closely with the Cromwellian system, had committed a mistake for which Independency as a whole had now to pay a heavy price: it was not as a religious, but as a political, problem that the question of permitting Independency to exist was almost universally viewed; and whenever the question was raised, it was the essentially treasonable character of Independency that was adduced as an ample reason for deciding it in a negative sense. Through the whole of this period, rumours were

[1] Vol. I. pp. 407, 409.

constantly being circulated to the effect that the Nonconformists were conniving at an invasion by the Dutch, or were plotting for Richard Cromwell's restoration, or were in other ways aiming at tumbling the happy settlement of 1660 into chaos again;[1] while a Parliamentary debater of so late a date as 1673, when the Commons were at last inclining to a more favourable mood,[2] expressed the prevalent opinion in declaring that "a Puritan was ever a rebel," and harped upon the old familiar chord by reminding the House that "these Dissenters made up the whole army against the King."[3] The position was made more difficult and the charges of designed treason more plausible, by the indisputable fact that secret plotting was actually carried on —chiefly by old soldiers of the Commonwealth army— during the reign of Charles the Second. An enemy of Independency had an easy case to urge before an audience already favourably disposed to the pleader's side, when he maintained that the Independency which had been allied with anti-royalism in the open was probably still allied with anti-royalism underground. But as a matter of fact, the Independents, once the Restoration of Charles had become an accomplished fact, had acquiesced in it, probably with no particular warmth, but nevertheless quite sincerely, hoping that the Declaration of Breda might at any rate be taken as their warrant to live. Their London and Westminster ministers had presented an address to the returning King, ministers of Lancashire soon afterwards following suit.[4] If a story told by Clarendon[5] may be trusted (and though no other authority than Clarendon's can be definitely quoted in its support, a hint by one Baptist historian, to the effect that the Baptists had "made overtures to the King for his restoration,"[6] seems to show that it is not without ground) some of the Baptists returned to loyalty even before the Restoration, and had actually, in the year 1658, engaged in

[1] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 348.
[2] See *infra*, pp. 81, 82.
[3] Stoughton, as former note (ed. 1881), iii. 414.
[4] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), pp. 4, 422; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 79, 80.
[5] *History of the Rebellion*, vi. 66 ff.
[6] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, ii. 91.

correspondence with the exiled Charles with a view to helping him back to his throne if only he would grant to everybody unfettered liberty in the worship of God. Whatever the degree of truth in the story may be, it is certain that, once the King was back, the Congregationalists and Baptists alike were prepared to own his rule. But in view of bygone happenings, it is not surprising that the passionately loyal and passionately repentant nation—seeing in the Independents the seducers who had done so much to lead it astray—should refuse to believe in the genuineness of Independent respect for the throne. The general sentiment could not bring itself to permit to Independency any grace. And with the general sentiment set so dead against them, and in face of the assumption—made, as has been stated, with hardly a question anywhere[1]—that all the religious legislation of recent years has annulled, every "outside" worshipper thus being turned into a criminal again, the Independents were indeed in evil case. As for the Quakers, when one remembers how from the beginning of the Quaker movement the negative and protesting spirit had even in the best of them been allowed too unlimited play, and had in the case of some led to extremes of reprehensible excess, one cannot wonder that the majority should, in its new and fervent temper, look upon them as Ishmaels whose hand was against every man and against whom the hand of every man might well be turned.

Immediately after the Restoration—indeed, when the Restoration, though certain, was only imminent and not accomplished—persecution began, to continue with unabated force during the whole period of the negotiations we have traced; and all the old laws, both civil and ecclesiastical, Statute and Canon, now discovered by a delighted nation to have been not dead but sleeping, woke from their trance and laid about them with heavy hand. The pages of the older historians tell in vivid language how meetings of all descriptions were broken up, how the very homes of the worshippers were invaded, how magistrates, officers, and soldiers gave themselves over to a spirit of riotous and wanton insult against the poor sectaries whom circumstances had delivered

[1] *Supra*, p. 7.

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into their power. And all this on the mere assumption that the old order had come back, before anything like a definite religious settlement was in sight, and while the echoes of the Breda Declaration still rung loud. To give many instances would only be to construct a list whose every succeeding item would in all essentials copy the one before. One may be content with the mention of a few cases which, springing here and there to one's eye as it ranges over the field, make fair samples of what was going on practically everywhere. Wales—in which country Nonconformists had multiplied since the founding of that Church at Llanvaches noticed at an earlier stage[1]—perhaps afforded to the followers of the chase their happiest hunting-ground; and there it was that men and women—Baptists, Congregationalists, and Quakers—charged with religious disaffection were dragged from their very beds to prison, or brought before the authorities shackled, like dangerous beasts, in chains.[2] But persecution in England kept fairly equal step with persecution in Wales. In England one sees Nonconformist meetings broken up, even the private dwellings of Nonconformists disturbed, and the suspicion of treachery constantly alleged as a justification for dragging Nonconformists before the magistrates and imposing upon them vexatious and irritating oaths.[3] The Baptists had many who at this time suffered hardship for their faith—Dover, Chatham, Reading, Boston in Lincolnshire, and many other towns, thrusting Baptist confessors into their cells, and Baptist meetings at "Bulstake Alley," "Brick Lane," and other places in the capital being rudely interrupted by "soldiers wicked, swearing, and debauched."[4] Both General and Calvinistic Baptists were included among those named; and the "Bulstake Alley" congregation is noteworthy as one of the pioneer "seventh-day Baptist" Churches—"holding

[1] Vol. I. pp. 297, 299. Religious developments in Wales make a separate story, and can only be touched upon in these pages by way of brief reference such as this. They may be studied in Rees's *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, or in Elvet Lewis's shorter book, *Nonconformity in Wales*.

[2] See Rees, *History of Protestant Nonconformity in Wales*, pp. 97 ff.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), pp. 477, 478; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 138, 139, 145.

[4] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, ii. 94, 149, 154, 160 ff.; Taylor, *History of General Baptists*, i. 243, 270. For London see also a pamphlet, published in 1662, called *Behold a Cry*.

the seventh day as a Sabbath"[1]—which were afterwards to uphold a special controversy of their own. The Quakers were even more sorely tried. Charles, it is true, always seemed to feel towards them a more particular favour than towards others of the Nonconformist bodies, perhaps perceiving (later on gratitude provided another reason for leniency, another reason whereby at the beginning of his reign the King, not knowing, could not have been moved)[2] how absolutely unjust the popular hostility to them really was. Even when a Quaker is suspiciously (as some think) laying in a stock of powder and shot "as in the way of his trade," the King's instructions go no further than that the Quaker, "considering his opinions, is to give weekly accounts of what he takes in or sells out, and if needful, give security not to provide nor dispose of any without such an account."[3] But it was the popular sentiment, not that of Charles, that was decisive; and though Charles in 1660 spoke fair words with Richard Hubberthorne, a Quaker representative, in private conversation,[4] and in 1661 made the storm of persecution which had for long been raging fiercely round the Quakers in America to subside,[5] he could do little for the hated and despised sect at home. The general feeling towards its members comes out when a correspondent writes to Secretary Nicholas from Bristol: "These monsters are more numerous here than in all the West of England, and have meetings of 1000 or 1200, to the great alarm of the city."[6] Indeed, Hubberthorne himself—so little did the fact of the King having smiled upon him avail—was dragged out of the Quaker gathering at the "Bull and Mouth," and died in Newgate Jail in 1662.[7] All over the country the anti-Quaker rage waxed fierce, riding rough-shod over every

[1] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, ii. 165.

[2] *Infra*, p. 77.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1661–1662), p. 107.

[4] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, i. 466-471; Gough, *History of the Quakers*, i. 440.

[5] The King sent Samuel Shattuck, a Quaker who had been banished from the Colony on penalty of death if he returned, to be his accredited messenger with an order for suspension of rigorous proceedings (Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, i. 517-519; Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, pp. 94, 97-99).

[6] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), p. 363.

[7] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 54.

obstacle even of established law in order to vent itself and glut its appetite for the infliction of pain, and so unrestrainedly working its will that, according to an estimate of 1661, more than five thousand Friends had by that time been flung into prison since Charles came to the throne.[1] Venner's insurrection, while it brought round all the Nonconformists a yet more loudly-howling wind of angry passion than had blown upon them before, had for the Quakers even direr consequences than for the rest—in part, no doubt, because mere disclaimers of complicity or sympathy, whether from Independent or Quaker, were only laughed at, and because the Quakers could not under any circumstances take the oaths whereby many others were able to stand as cleared. Following upon the Venner riots, indeed, the general punishing and pillage of Quaker meetings and Quaker families went so far as to become a national scandal,[2] the King being at last obliged to intervene with a Proclamation forbidding the searching of houses by the soldiery without a warrant and a constable, and a little later on ordering the liberation of all Quakers imprisoned for conscience sake alone.[3] But this check to irregular persecution was only the prelude to more stringent persecution under legal forms. Not even the Proclamation which condemned as seditious all religious meetings except those held in the parish Churches[4] was considered a sufficient display of official detestation for this most hated sect of all; and in May of 1662 the Quakers had at least the satisfaction of finding themselves thought worthy of a special parliamentary Act which punished refusal to take prescribed oaths, or participation in Quaker assemblies of more than four persons, with fines or imprisonment for the first two offences and with banishment for the third.[5] Such, briefly summarised, were the fortunes of the different Nonconformist associations from the Restoration to the time when the Act of Uniformity went through.

[1] *For the King and Both Houses of Parliament. Being a short Relation of the Sad Estate and Sufferings of the Innocent People of God, called Quakers* (*Somers Tracts*, ed. Scott, vii. 247-258).

[2] See Besse, *Sufferings of the Quakers*, i. 366.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1660–1661), pp. 475, 587.

[4] *Supra*, p. 21.

[5] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, i. 600-603; Gough, *History of the Quakers*, i. 499.

Turning for a moment from the religious associations in general to some individual leaders or members of them whom we have met before, we note among the happenings of the first two years of the restored monarchy that George Fox underwent a twenty weeks' imprisonment at Lancaster, being set free at length by the special interposition of the King[1]—that in Bedfordshire John Bunyan's long durance began, he "being indicted for an upholder and maintainer of unlawful assemblies and conventicles, and for not conforming to the Church of England," and being sentenced to an imprisonment which ultimately stretched to a space of twelve years;[2] and that John Biddle, who had retired into the country during Richard Cromwell's brief Protectorate, and had afterwards returned to London, was arrested in June 1662, being set free by a pitying sheriff three months later on in order that inevitable death might not find him within prison walls.[3] The whole recital is enough to show that, if the stress of Nonconformist hardship was not quite so great as it afterwards became, this is the utmost that can be said by way of reducing the estimate; and it is enough to prove—though on the other hand it does make one wonder, as one gazes onward remembering that in these two years the stage of transition was not passed, what, since these things were done in the green tree, would be done in the dry—that the Act of Uniformity made no essential difference in the status of "outside" religious associations in the eyes either of the law or of the people at large.

Upon the exodus from the Church of England of those ministers who could not pass under the yoke of the Uniformity Act, Presbyterians and Independents (including in the latter term both those who had held clerical office under the Cromwellian scheme and those who had more consistently remained outside), Quakers and Socinians, in fact the members of every description of Nonconformist religious association, found themselves pushed together into a fellowship of misfor-

[1] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, i. 458-465; Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), i. 473-488.

[2] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, ii. 92; Brown, *Life of Bunyan* (ed. 1887), pp. 152 ff.

[3] Toulmin, *A Review of the Life, Character, and Writings of Rev. John Biddle*, pp. 127-130.

tune, and faced, accordingly, by a problem which, whatever their differences might be, pressed upon all alike. They were all now, whether by compulsion or by choice, outside the borders of the Established Church; but they knew well that unless their position were in some way legalised, they would not be permitted to stay. What had already happened to the "outside" Nonconformists was significant enough of what was likely to happen still both to the original "outsiders" and to the recent recruits to the "outside" ranks. Those who had been thrust forth might expect to be unceremoniously pulled back again, and those who had withdrawn to be mercilessly whipped in—in each case, of course, without the smallest choice of terms. The authorities, they knew, were bent upon coercing them into a religious marriage they abhorred. Resistance to this coercion—in other words, the vindication of their right to stake out their own plot of ground, so far as religion was concerned, and to cultivate it as they would, was the business lying upon the hands of them all; and now that the question of Comprehension had passed from the agenda, there began that long debate of toleration which was to find its end, or at least the beginning of its end, in the Toleration Act of 1689. The main topic, in fact, was again that of the days of the Westminster Assembly and the Presbyterian ascendancy; only the Presbyterians, who had anathematised toleration then, pleaded for it now. In respect of the Presbyterians and the Independents, there had been an outward sign of the new bond between them in a united sacramental service held at St. Bartholomew's, Thames Street, when the Act of Uniformity became law.[1] And although the ghosts of old disputes now and then flitted across the stage (as when, on Charles's Declaration to be presently noted, the Independents chafed at Presbyterian hesitancy, reproachfully reminding their brethren that they, the Presbyterians, had once before done despite to the cause of freedom by their obstinacy at Worcester House[2]) the bond held fast for many years to come. True, toleration was not for the Presbyterians quite what the Independents, for the most part, held it to be.

[1] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1661–1662), p. 396.
[2] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 430.

The former still held to their distinction between "tolerable" and "intolerable" sects,[1] the Romanists, of course, falling on the "intolerable" side of the line; while the Independents, swept far ahead of others on the tide of their traditions, would have had the rain of toleration, like that of heaven, fall upon both the evil and upon the good. But, this apart, the necessity of struggling for the mere right to be—which was the one immediate and pressing necessity of the hour—linked up Presbyterians and Independents, as for that matter "outside" communities generally, for common purposes and in common hopes and fears.

Their chief hope lay in the known disposition of the King. And indeed, no sooner was the Act of Uniformity passed—even before it was actually at work—than Charles had cast about for ways and means of evading both it and other anti-Nonconformist laws, and of making for his use a shield which he could interpose between the sting of those laws and its victims whenever he might choose.[2] Now, as before, the winning of the power of indulgence was the problem he had to solve; and though he was to settle down directly to a ten years' endeavour at obtaining it under parliamentary sanction and by parliamentary gift, he had first to go through that brief hour of defiant mood alluded to above as having come upon him just after the Act of Uniformity went through,[3] the hour in which his dominating idea was not to receive but to snatch. A dispensing power, a power to bind and loose, must at any cost be won for his hand. Charles had gone so far as to promise the Presbyterians, in the interval between the passing of the Act and its coming into force, that he would postpone its operation for three months if they would bring themselves to use the Liturgy for that length of time. But he had been compelled to recede from his word: for the moment his eagerness had been restrained by some of his counsellors;[4] and the release of a number of Quakers from jail

[1] *Supra*, p. 10.

[2] Consult a letter from Sir Henry Bennett to the King (given in Lister's *Life of Clarendon*, iii. 198-201) from which it clearly appears that Charles's intentions had become known.

[3] *Supra*, p. 36.

[4] Clarendon, *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), i. 567; Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 42.

stood as its only sign.[1] "All hope of suspension of the Act of Uniformity taken away," one clergyman, the Rev. Ralph Josselin, writes in his diary.[2] But when the Presbyterian ministers of London, three days after the fateful August 24, presented him with a petition asking him that he should find some method of enabling them to continue in their places and their work,[3] Charles leapt at the opportunity thus given him of basing his action on the principle of magnanimity instead of upon his own private desires. The energy which had temporarily died down under his advisers' cooling breath flamed up again, and, having promised the deputation to do all he could—the promise meeting with a measure of immediate redemption in certain arrests of the new Act's operation which in various cases he contrived to make[4]—Charles the next day informed his Council that he intended, if it were in any way possible, to give the Nonconformists peace. By this, it must be understood, he meant that it was through the exercise of his sovereign prerogative peace should come; and his idea was not to ask for dispensing power from Parliament, but to seize it unasking. This was the defiant hour. The vehement opposition of the Council, led by Sheldon, compelled the King, however, to an abandonment of the plan,[5] and then to a formulation in his own mind of the other and milder plan which for the ensuing ten years he cherished—the plan of inducing Parliament to grant him the power of indulgence for which he craved. By December Charles was ready for his new move. On the 26th of that month he issued a "Declaration" to the effect that he proposed not to exercise the power of indulgence arbitrarily—that idea had passed to the background with the defiant hour's passing — but to "move Parliament" to bestow it upon him; and now, though the King indignantly repudiated the idea that he had privily shown favour to Roman Catholics before, they, as well as Nonconformists of the

[1] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1661–1662), p. 466.
[2] *Diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin*, edited by E. Hockcliffe for the Royal Historical Society, p. 141.
[3] Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iv. 350, 351.
[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 279.
[5] Neal, as before.

Protestant faith, were to feel the shining of the hoped-for sun.[1]

Thus was struck the first blow in the first round of the pending ten years' fight. Very naturally, Parliament took the Declaration as a challenge: equally naturally, the Episcopal bench was roused to wrath; and to this it may be added that the people as a whole, in their dread of Romanism and their suspicion of Nonconformist treason, shook their heads. Even many of those whom it was proposed to benefit hung back. To this fresh Declaration the Presbyterians felt an objection identical with that which they had felt to the older Declaration of 1660, the promised favour to the Catholics causing the whole thing to seem to their taste like water from a poisoned spring; and though some of them had an interview with Charles in which the King renewed his promises,[2] the deputation refused to lower its guard of silence and reserve. Only the Independents professed themselves content, as with their larger views on toleration it was no more than consistent for them to do. Philip Nye, the old Independent of the Westminster Assembly and of Cromwellian days, who had himself waited upon Charles in order to obtain some certainty that the new and better prospects were not wholly such stuff as dreams are made of, came away so greatly uplifted that he attempted to induce Baxter (who had refused to have anything to do with the Declaration at all or to join the Presbyterian deputation spoken of just now[3]) to make acceptance and acknowledgment of the royal grace.[4] But of course the gratification of the Independents counted for little as a factor in the case. The strength of the antagonistic forces mentioned just now boded ill for the success of the King's scheme, and was altogether irresistible when added to the power of the resentment which the very proposal of the scheme roused in Parliament itself. Of these antagonistic forces the hostility of the Bishops was by no means the weakest or the least. How stringently they

[1] Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement, etc.*, pp. 460-468; Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 430.

[2] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 65.

[3] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part ii. p. 429.

[4] *Ibid.* part. ii. p. 430.

meant to administer the Uniformity Act, and how strenuously they would oppose any slackening of the reins, they had already proved in the "Articles of Enquiry and Visitation" which they had issued soon after the Act was through.[1] Although in some dioceses a slightly less magisterial tone than in others was employed, the inquisition was, taking the country through, of the minutest kind; and the depth to which the probe was driven, the closeness of the examination as to surplices, as to maintenance of the exact words of the Prayer Book, as to the observance of holy days, as to the possession of a licence by "lecturers" without a settled cure, and indeed as to almost every point that longest meditation could suggest to a Bishop's mind, recalls the archiepiscopal visitation of Laud.[2] This, however, was only what might have been expected, and was for that matter legitimate enough. It has been admitted that from the Bishops' point of view, and according to their theory of the Church, uniformity was a *sine quâ non*; and in that they sought uniformity and ensued it they are by no means to be blamed. But for the spirit which some of them manifested throughout this entire period it is hard to find any excuse. Clarendon represents them, in connection with a Presbyterian petition presented soon after the passing of the Act of Uniformity, as troubled that "those fellows" should still vex the King's peace;[3] and, as was presently to be proved, they were no less hot against Nonconformists who remained without the Established Church than against those who sought to be "comprehended" within. In short, in the temper of the Bishops and of the higher clergy, Parliament, in its resistance to the schemes of Charles, found one of its best allies.

Conscious of its backing, Parliament proceeded first of all to thrust the King's Declaration aside, and thereafter to take its revenge. The immediate suggestion itself was disposed of speedily enough. In February of 1663 Lord Robarts introduced into the Upper House a Bill designed to legalise the royal desire and will (except on the point of

[1] On these, see Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 284-286.

[2] Vol. I. pp. 280, 281.

[3] *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), i. 569.

indulgence to Roman Catholics) as embodied in the Declaration of the previous December and in the speech from the throne; but under the opposition of the Bishops (Clarendon joining them in a resistance to the King's will for which he had subsequently to pay the price), it had, after some discussion, to be dropped.[1] The Commons, not satisfied with this, dealt with the matter at length in their reply to the King's speech, giving reason upon reason why Charles's wishes could not be met — all of them, perhaps, being summed up in this, that to meet those wishes would "be inconsistent with the methods and proceedings of the Laws of England" — and inserting a clause which, ominous in many ways, was evidently meant to enunciate a first principle whereby the matter was considered closed once for all. "We have considered the nature of your majesty's Declaration from Breda, and are humbly of opinion that your majesty ought not to be pressed with it any further; because it is not a promise in itself, but only a gracious declaration of your majesty's intention to do what in you lay, and what a Parliament should advise your majesty to do."[2] In reply to this the King, declining discussion, merely observed that he found "what he said much misunderstood," so recognising at least a temporary defeat.[3] But the Commons would not rest. Having warded off the King's attack, they proceeded to plan a counter-attack of their own. For any infringements of the Act of Uniformity by ministers of the Established Church the Bishops might be trusted to keep a sharp look out. But further enactments against "outside" religious gatherings might serve to demonstrate to the King how fixed was Parliament's mood, and also as a proper retaliation for the King's assault upon its power. Both excuses for and incitements to further legislation presented themselves at call. Excuses, indeed, were abundant — might, in fact, easily be viewed rather as obligations than as excuses by those so disposed. Though it was generally assumed that the old Elizabethan laws against conventicles had renewed their force at the Restoration, here and there

[1] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xi. 482, etc.

[2] The proceedings in the Lower House are given at length in Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement, etc.* (ed. 1862), pp. 468-476.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 477.

a sceptical voice was raised; and though the Act of Uniformity indicated clearly enough that it was designed to show every man "the rule to which he is to conform in public worship," certain kinds of private or semi-private gathering might, by some latitude of interpretation, be conceived by interested parties as allowed; or it might be plausibly contended that it was only to the clergy, not to laymen, its provisions applied; and in the existence of such loop-holes of escape as these the Commons, with their hatred and suspicion of Independents and the rest, might find sufficient reason for taking up law-making against "outside" Nonconformity once more. The year 1663, however, proved practically barren in this regard, for though Bills against both Romanists and Protestant sectaries were passed by the Lower House (of that against the sectaries Pepys writes that it is "a too devilish severe measure against conventicles, beyond all moderation")[1] they were shelved by the Lords, whose zeal was still of the same less fiery quality which had distinguished it in 1662.[2] As a set-off against this, however, the Commons vanquished the Lords on the question of what "assent and consent" to the Act of Uniformity really implied — the point being raised by the Upper House on a Bill sent up by the Lower "for the relief of such persons as by sickness or other impediment, are disabled from subscribing the Declaration in the Act of Uniformity, and explanatory of part of the same Act." Taking the opportunity, the Lords attempted to insert a clause to the effect that subscription involved "assent and consent" only "as to the practice of and obedience to the said Act," hoping that for at any rate some anxious consciences the path might thus be smoothed; but as they did not persist in face of objection, the Commons were on this point enabled to score.[3] But this was a small matter compared with what was soon to come. The autumn of the year brought fresh excuse, if the Commons desired to find it, in the rumours of treasonable plots and outbreaks on the part of Nonconformists, the "Farnley Wood Plot" (of which it is even now uncertain how much

[1] *Diary* (ed. Wheatley, 1904), iii. 145. [2] *Supra*, p. 25.
[3] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xi. 577.

was imaginary and how much was real) being the one that raised the loudest noise;[1] while incitement was added to excuse by a petition from the clergy protesting against "the strange race of men who laboured to throw off the yoke of government both civil and ecclesiastical," asking for severer laws against "Anabaptists" (so the old title and the old confusion recur) and desiring that larger fines should be inflicted for absence from the parish Church.[2] It may be said here, in explanation of the special stress laid upon the spread of the Baptists, termed "Anabaptists," in this petition, that it points back to the earlier association between one or two leaders of the Baptist denomination (the instance of John Canne will be remembered)[3] and the Fifth-Monarchy Men, this association, as it came to mind, serving to make a connection, wholly satisfactory to those who wanted it made, between the Baptists of Restoration times and the earlier revolutionary Continental "Anabaptists" whose successors the Fifth-Monarchy men may in a manner be said to have been. Besides the general suspicion of disaffection under which all Independency, through its identification with the Cromwellian system, lay, there was in the case of the Baptists a possibility of plausibly, though quite unjustly, charging them with the special sin of holding the doctrines which had led to Venner's revolt. Under the support of the new excuses, and under the stimulus of the new incitement, Parliament introduced in March of 1664, and passed in May, to hold good for three years, the notorious "First Conventicle Act," which, having declared that Elizabeth's similar Act was still in force, offered further "remedies against the growing and dangerous practices of seditious sectaries and other disloyal persons" — the "remedies" being contained in provisions to the effect that persons of sixteen years old and upwards must not attend religious services, held "in other manner than is allowed by the Liturgy," in greater numbers than four, that penalties were five pounds for the first offence and ten for the second (three and six months' imprisonment being the respective

[1] A brief account of the Farnley Wood Plot is in Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 307, 308. See also *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports*, xiv. App. 2, pp. 269, 270 (*Portland MS.*).

[2] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 580.

[3] Vol. I. p. 381.

alternatives if payment were not made), and that a third offence should draw down a fine of one hundred pounds, or a transportation of seven years, upon an offender's head.[1]

This, one would have supposed, was drastic enough to satisfy Nonconformity's bitterest foe. But it seemed as though Parliament, having once taken up and swung the scourge, could not stay its arm. Also, excuses and incitements multiplied themselves quickly. For additional excuse, there was the not very surprising fact that Nonconformists were reported to be suffering from a sense of grievance and did not hesitate to say so,[2] and the more serious allegation that their sympathies were turned against their own country in the matter of the recently begun Dutch war.[3] And the very courage which some of the Nonconformist ministers had shown in that they had on their own initiative acted as substitutes (so undoubtedly committing a breach of the law, however excusable under the circumstances it might be), for such ministers of the Established Church as had fled in fear of the devastating Plague of 1665, was turned into a crime; it being charged against them that they had used the opportunity—as for that matter a few of them quite probably did—of pronouncing the Plague itself a divine visitation and judgment for the offences which the nation, in rejecting them and their plea, had committed against God.[4] There was also the introduction in the House of Lords, of course with the connivance of Charles, of a Bill (1665) which showed the King to be still capable of an effort, if no more than a sporadic one, at obtaining his much-desired dispensing power, since it would have permitted Catholic and Protestant Nonconformists alike to purchase liberty of worship for a definite scheduled payment in coin.[5] No particular energy was put into the advocacy of the Bill: it can scarcely rank as a very serious move on the part of Charles, being, in fact, not much

[1] For the text of the Act, see Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement, etc.* (ed. 1862), pp. 477-488.

[2] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 400, 401.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 621; *ibid.* (Domestic Series, 1665–1666), p. xxv.

[4] Burnet, as penultimate note.

[5] Clarendon, *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), ii. 93-98.

more than a sign that he still held the question to be alive; and it was soon, so to say, put out of its pain. But it furnished the eager Commons with another plea. For additional incitement, there was the spectacle of Archbishop Sheldon (he had succeeded to Canterbury on Juxon's death in June of 1663) energetically using the power which the Conventicle Act had already given him, feverishly demanding returns from his episcopal brethren as to the number of conventicles, and the conduct and livelihood and political opinions of ejected ministers, in their different sees.[1] Warming to its work, Parliament passed in October 1665 the "Act for restraining Nonconformists from inhabiting Corporations"—for which cumbrous title that of the "Five Mile Act" has usually been substituted in common speech. It is not going too far to say that the provisions of this Act stand for nothing but pure revenge. It must have been realised, and one cannot suppose the realisation to have been without some flavour of pleasantness, that the Act's effect would be to penalise Nonconformity not only by forbidding its services, but by reducing most of its ministers to the alternative "conform or starve." Any one professing himself to be a minister, and refusing obedience to the Act of Uniformity, was to swear that he held it unlawful under any circumstances to take up arms against the King or the King's commissioned representatives, and that he would not "at any time endeavour any alteration of Government, either in Church or State." If he declined to swear, he was forbidden to come, otherwise than as a mere passer-by, within five miles of cities and parliamentary or corporate towns, or of any town in which he had held clerical office, or in which he had lectured, or in which he had conducted religious service after the Nonconformist way. To those who played the part of informers, one-third of the fines was to be given. And in order that any Nonconformist ministers who had so far accepted the situation as to settle down in remoter districts and to seek their bread by tutorial work—in order that they too might feel the sting, it was ordered that any such must swear like the rest, or meet the same fine of forty pounds which was imposed upon violators of the "Five Mile"

[1] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 582, 583.

clause.[1] "A purely political Act," a recent historian denominates this cruel piece of legal torture, after remarking that "it contained no religious test."[2] How, in view of the required oath not "to endeavour any alteration of Government, either in Church or State"—which of course implied, since the Conventicle Act had rendered all Nonconformist gatherings illegal, or had emphasised their illegality, that those who took the oath would accept the prohibition as final for all time—it can be contended that the oath was "purely political" and that "it contained no religious test," it is not easy to see. Much more acceptable to most judgments will be the opinion of the contemporary letter-writer who declared that "all are amazed at the late Act against Nonconformity, judging it against the law of Nature, and therefore void."[3] Void, indeed, it did not turn out to be. But it was not much else than a piece of pure revenge. To the masses of the people, on fire with the spirit of loyalty, it was no doubt acceptable as inflicting punishment upon that Nonconformity which in one of its important sections had been foremost in bringing about the national disgrace of not so many years before, and which, in their misunderstanding and ignorance, they looked upon as still tainted with disloyalty through and through. And for the misunderstanding of the masses of the people Nonconformity, at least as represented in Independency, would have had to admit that it had in great measure itself to blame. But it is difficult to believe that Parliament—still more difficult to believe that Sheldon, who gave all his weight to supporting the Bill—did not know better. To Sheldon and those who supported him, the passing of the Bill brought something like adequate satisfaction for the humiliation which in former years the Church of England had been put to at the hands of those who were now in the dust, and was, besides, a smart return thrust to the King's attempt at snatching back from the Church's grasp what the Act of Uniformity had bestowed. For Parliament it was vindication and retaliation—vindication of its own power and privilege, and retaliation for the

[1] For the Act, see Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement, etc.*, pp. 488-491.

[2] Blaxland, *The Struggle with Puritanism*, pp. 134, 135.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1665–1666), p. 72.

blow which the King had aimed at them in the Declaration of December 1662. The temper of the Commons may be gauged by the fact that, because some of the Lords had opposed the Five Mile Act, an attempt was made to pass another Bill imposing the oath of the Act upon every man in the realm, and that the Bill, though it failed, did so only by a majority of three.[1] But without this, enough had been done. In the Five Mile Act of 1665, following as it did upon the Conventicle Act of 1664, Parliament had salved its wounded dignity, had made emphatic assertion of its questioned prerogatives, and in that ten years' battle waged round the royal dispensing power between itself and Charles, had closed victoriously the first round of the fight.

Through an interval, now, the contending forces waited as if for the recovery of breath. Then, on Clarendon's fall from power in 1667, the second round of the fight began. Clarendon had maintained throughout that same attitude of antagonism toward the King's policy which had been shown in his opposition to Lord Robarts's Bill of 1663;[2] and from that time onward the cooling of Charles's favourable disposition—or of his "warm heart," as one recorder puts it—towards his Chancellor had gone on apace.[3] On other faces, too, frowns were gathering towards the man who had been favourite. Indeed, a futile attempt at his impeachment—futile largely because the King, knowing that Clarendon still possessed the nation's countenance and that his own irritation must for the present be kept down, would not allow it to succeed—had been made by the Earl of Bristol in July of the year named.[4] But by 1667 things had changed: a succession of national disasters, the Plague, the Great Fire of London, and the humiliation of a Dutch fleet sailing triumphantly up the Thames, had turned the mood of the people from love to dislike, if not to hate; and Charles found that in order to get rid of the counsellor who had

[1] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, iv. 328.

[2] *Supra*, p. 51.

[3] Clarke, *Life of James II.*, i. 428; Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 45; Clarendon, *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), ii. 100. Clarendon also himself notes that the Bishops had begun to lose the King's favour after their hostility to the Bill of 1665 (*ibid.*).

[4] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 45, 46; Clarendon, *Life and Continuation* (ed. 1857), ii. 24-26.

thwarted him, all he had to do was to let things take their course.[1] Clarendon went; and into Clarendon's place of power stepped the Committee known as the "Cabal"—Buckingham, Arlington, Sir Henry Bennet, Sir William Coventry, and Sir Orlando Bridgeman—whose members were of course favourable to the King's designs. The moment seemed propitious for a new effort; and by the time Parliament met in October rumours of impending change were rife. Groundless they certainly were not; for a Comprehension Bill had been prepared by Sir Robert Atkins, according to which Presbyterian ministers who subscribed the Articles so far as these concerned "the confession of the true Christian faith and the doctrine of the sacraments" should be allowed to preach in any Church in the land, there being also some further clauses over which, since the Bill died immediately upon its birth from its author's mind, we need not delay.[2] Of this particular Bill nothing was ever heard. But when in February 1668 Parliament came together again, there were larger possibilities looming up, and the comparatively small design of the preceding autumn had risen again from its trance, having grown while it slept. Sir Orlando Bridgeman had had a conference with some of the Presbyterians in the previous month: a scheme in the construction of which Wilkins, Bridgeman's chaplain, collaborated with Baxter, Bates, and Manton, had been drawn up; and Sir Matthew Hale, it had been promised, was to appear in 1668 in a *rôle* similar to that which he had played in 1660, by introducing the consequent Bill into the Commons' House.[3] The immediate aim was Comprehension—that will-o'-the-wisp so elusive always, but still so attractive to some—the suggestions in this respect being similar to those of the plan just laid aside; but there were to be provisions which would have permitted Nonconformists other than Presbyterians to build their own places of worship and to worship in their own way if they consented to register

[1] Lingard, as previous note, ix. 74-78; Clarendon, as previous note, ii. 453, 454.

[2] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 372, 373, gives the particulars, quoting from Bishop Barlow's MS. in the Bodleian Library.

[3] For the scheme, see Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. pp. 23-35; Stoughton, as previous note, iii. 373-377; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 431-433.

their names and made payment of a certain sum every year. But, as Baxter pathetically laments, "All this labour was in vain."[1] The Commons had no idea in connection with such proposals except to brush them aside and break them in the act. In fact, there were points in the scheme which might well make the Commons suspect that though a placing of dispensing power in the King's hands was not definitely suggested (as it had been suggested in the Bill founded on the Declaration of 1662[2]) this was nevertheless the real object in view. Appeal to the King's Courts was to be permitted to a suspended clergyman; and the suggestions as to Nonconformist registrations, Nonconformist certificates, and Nonconformist money payments, would, if carried out, have made the entire religious position fluid and uncertain by introducing too much subordinate officialism between the Parliament itself and the religious affairs over which it was determined to exercise so strict a control. Of this kind of thing the Commons—remembering how the King's known predilections had already, in some instances, hindered the due execution of the anti-Nonconformist penal laws[3]—had had more than enough. They might safely prophesy that if they consented to the introduction of anything permissive into the religious arrangements of the country, the offering of an inch by them would soon come to mean the taking of a yard by the King: they might safely assume that the appearance of this new scheme was simply the re-entrance, through another door and slightly disguised, of the same hated idea which had been expelled a little while before; and no one who is capable of making a psychological flight into the mind of Charles can doubt that this reading of the case would be right. Indeed, the project, as stated before, signalises an endeavour on the King's part at inducing Parliament to grant him dispensing power without realising what it did—to hand over to him, while its attention was diverted from the issue, the authority from which, so long as its eyes were open, it would not part.

Construing, therefore, the threat of the Bill as a challenge to their own rights, the Commons once more, as in 1662,

[1] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. p. 36.
[2] *Supra*, p. 48.
[3] See *supra*, p. 37.

girded up their loins for defence, retaliation and revenge. The very introduction of Sir Matthew Hale's measure into the House was warded off; for the Commons took the initiative by expressing a desire (which Charles, in view of the money grants he required, could not resist) that the King should issue a Proclamation for the stricter execution of all the anti-Nonconformist laws;[1] and a little later, when, in discussing a part of the King's speech which counselled Parliament to take "some course to beget a better union and composure in the minds of my Protestant subjects," it was moved that the King should himself talk the matter over with such Nonconformists as he pleased to summon, the motion was rejected almost with contempt.[2] Into such an atmosphere as that whose existence all this indicated it was useless to introduce any Comprehension scheme, particularly one already suspected of meaning more than it said. But this was only defence. Retaliation and revenge had yet to come. Once again, excuses for drastic action were at hand; and the House had been rendered, as one of its members told Pepys, "furious and passionate" and "stark mad" by reports, quite false but none the less inflammatory for that, concerning the wickedness of "fanatics" who had come into the Churches in great numbers, turned out the people, pulled the surplices over the ministers' heads, and afterwards preached themselves in the desecrated shrines.[3] Something, the shocked Commons might well plead, must surely be done. The expiry of the Conventicle Act (it will be remembered that it had been passed for three years only in 1664[4]) gave them their chance; and in April a Bill providing for its continuance went through.[5] Here, however, the zeal of the Commons met with a temporary check. Before the Lords had done their part, Parliament was prorogued; and prorogation followed prorogation till October of the succeeding year. But the check was no more than temporary. By the time Parliament met again, fresh excuses and incitements for severity could be found. In the interval Charles had given audience to some of the

[1] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, iv. 413.
[2] The figures of the division were 176 to 70.
[3] *Diary* (ed. Wheatley, 1904), vii. 345.
[4] *Supra*, p. 53.
[5] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, iv. 422.

Presbyterian leaders once more, and had once more made dulcet music for them upon the Comprehension string;[1] while Sheldon, having instructed his subordinates to see what dreadful things a minute enquiry into the number of "unlawful religious assemblies" might unearth, had found by the reports that Nonconformity, instead of dying down, was being fruitful and multiplying and replenishing the earth.[2] Falling to work again, Parliament passed the second Conventicle Act before the spring of 1670 had gone—the new Act not being precisely a reproduction of the earlier, being, indeed, less extreme in the punishments it inflicted, but being more likely to accomplish its end in that it mulcted magistrates and other officials in money penalties if they neglected their duties; declaring also that it must itself be always interpreted most stringently *against* conventicles where any doubt could exist; and lending itself to injustices and perjuries of various kinds in that it awarded to informers, as the Five Mile Act had done, one-third of the collected fines.[3] How it impressed some even in the Lower House may be seen from the fact that one of the members there thought "the quintessence of arbitrary malice" a phrase by which it might be aptly described.[4] It should be said, however, that the discussion upon the Bill revealed—as the discussion upon the King's speech of 1668 had also in minor degree revealed—an accentuated leaning on the part of some speakers towards the toleration idea. A more tolerant spirit was growing in the nature of things among thinking men, and was being passed on to the nation in general through more than one literary channel as these years went by;[5] so that even within the Parliamentary walls

[1] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. pp. 36, 37.

[2] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 588. The complete returns made to Sheldon from the various dioceses are given by G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence*, i. 3 ff.

[3] The fines were five shillings for the first offence, double that amount afterwards. Imprisonment is not mentioned. But the fines for an entire meeting might be levied upon one of its members if not procurable in any other way. For the text of the Act, see Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement, etc.* (ed. 1862), pp. 491-499.

[4] Andrew Marvell to his cousin (*Works*, ed. Grosart, ii. 316).

[5] Among books of the period that favoured toleration may be mentioned G. Mackenzie's *Religio Stoici*; J. Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatising*; Sir C. Wolseley's *Liberty of Conscience Asserted and Vindicated.*

it was sure to find a voice, and, had it been able to disentangle itself from political considerations there, would doubtless have pressed its case far more vigorously than under the actual circumstances it did. Moreover, a change of feeling towards the occupant of the throne was evidently in progress. Loyalty was still a passion; but it was coming to be felt by some rather for the institution than for the man in whom the institution was temporarily embodied—among the causes of this being the licentiousness of Charles's personal behaviour and of his Court, and the suspicion of his Catholicism which, as in the cases of his father and grandfather, was beginning to be felt. As to the first, the thing flaunted itself shamelessly before the gaze of all. A pamphleteer of 1668 complained in plain language about the money spent upon the King's mistresses.[1] Such voices as these rose stridently here and there. In 1670 Sir John Coventry dared to reflect on "The King's immoral life in Parliament"; and when "the Duke of Monmouth had him waylaid and beaten," the House of Commons took Sir John Coventry's side, and "framed an Act against malicious maiming and wounding."[2] As for the second, it had been noticed that, under the first Conventicle Act and the Five Mile Act, Roman Catholics had enjoyed a leniency not yielded to other Nonconformist sects;[3] and although for us the King's general feeling of obligation and gratitude towards Roman Catholicism, without the assumption of any religious faith in it, is sufficient to account for this (as also for the King's confession of Catholic preferences to Arlington and others,[4] which would no doubt become known and help to swell the tide of doubt) it is not surprising that indulgence, shown to Catholics, raised the question of Charles's religious position in people's minds. His position was, indeed, sufficiently a matter of conjecture to excite hopeful feelings in the breasts of some who themselves inclined to Rome—as, for instance, in the breast of a certain Abraham Nelson, who expressed his confidence that God would render the King

[1] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, Nov. 1667–Sept. 1668), p. 217. *Vox et Lacrimae Anglorum* is the pamphlet's title.

[2] Reresby's *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), p. 82.

[3] Bate (referring to *Western MSS.*), *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, p. 53.

[4] Clarke, *Life of James II.*, i. 441.

"famous through the earth" by making him "an instrument to reconcile the churches of Christendom and most chiefly the Church of Rome and us."[1] We know that Charles was, in fact, of no real religious faith at all; and we know, also, that in 1670 he expressly repudiated Roman Catholicism to his sister's face.[2] But surmise and suspicion were at the time natural enough. All this—this subtle alteration in men's feeling for the person of the King as distinct from the office of Kingship—would draw better minds to a cooler survey of the entire situation; and they might well begin to ask themselves, on such cooler survey, whether the Nonconformists were really the dangerous and traitorous folk that recent legislation assumed them to be. With a few who allowed sobriety to occupy the chair while they deliberated upon the question, the mood went even further, till in the end it came to them that persecution was doing harm rather than good to the true interest of the realm. In a memorial presented to the King after the first Conventicle Act had expired, and when the second was pending, Ashley (soon to be Earl of Shaftesbury) argued the matter on economic grounds, insisting that because "a considerable number of your Majesty's subjects are constantly transported to the American plantations for servants, and also transport themselves to those and other parts to enjoy the liberty of their mistaken consciences," land depreciated in value "to a disability of maintaining the owners, and paying your Majesty's necessary aids," while manufactures became "few and costly, whereby the merchant must lose the trade" (in foreign markets) "and your Majesty the revenue of it." Ashley suggested, therefore, that it would be well to find some means of "retaining those Dissenters who are among us, and attracting others from abroad," subtly arguing that inasmuch as even the Conventicle Act had made Nonconformist meetings unlawful only when a certain number of worshippers was exceeded ("which limit, I suppose, was

[1] It is interesting to note that this writer speaks of "that hot spirit of John Wiclif, of Oxford" as the chief of the "fiery spirits of Anti-Christian Puritans in former ages" by whom Rome and England were thrust apart (*Calendar of State Papers*, Domestic Series, 1664–1665, pp. 78, 79; Waddington, *Congregational History*, ii. 583–586).

[2] Lingard (*History of England*, ed. 1855, ix. 86) gives authorities for this.

set on the single consideration of preserving the public peace"), the principle was already conceded, and there remained only a question of how far permission might be safely stretched.[1] Had it not been that the following out of this line of thought and feeling happened, under the special conditions of the time, to lead to the same course of action which the King for his own purposes desired, and so by a sort of reflex influence discredited itself for those whom antagonism to the King's purposes had originally inspired to test it, the line might have been followed up by more. But in this respect also the question of toleration could not disentangle itself from the general political situation of the hour. The time for considering it upon its merits—or at any rate for giving practical effect to what consideration of it upon the merits might suggest—was not yet come. One notes for a sign of the times how the second Conventicle Act, as it pushed its way through Parliament, found that the spirit of toleration had crept in through some crevice in the wall and had to be countered and dislodged; but one goes on the note that it was rather a demonstration than a pitched battle that the spirit of toleration put up. The Act went through—the passing of it showing that the second round of the ten years' fight was over, and that at the end of the second, as at the end of the first, Parliament had scored.

With the issue by Charles of his Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 the third round began. But before passing to the episode of the King's final effort, its transient triumph and its defeat, it will be well to see how matters had been faring with the Nonconformist Churches (assemblies brought into existence as "outside" Churches by the Act of Uniformity, as well as those which had been "outside" before, being now ranked under the name) during the period we have surveyed, how they had borne themselves under the thunderbolts which repressive Act after repressive Act had dropped upon their heads. We need not do more than select a few examples to show how the conflict was waged between laws which meant to slay Nonconformity and a

[1] Christie's *Life of the First Earl of Shaftesbury*, ii. Appendix i. The memorial is quoted in Waddington's *Congregational History*, ii. 589, 590.

Nonconformity which refused to be slain. The struggle naturally became in its method a struggle between craft on the one side—the Nonconformists seeking to cover from prying eyes the secluded places where they met to praise and pray—and on the other an equal craft with the advantage of *force majeure*. In respect of the Quakers, however, this statement of the case does not quite hold good, since they, disdaining to hide—being like sheep in the midst of wolves, indeed, but like sheep which refused even to look in the direction whence the next wolf-spring might come—worshipped still after each repressive enactment as and where they had worshipped before. And for that matter, efforts to hide were of small avail. For the authorities, determined to ferret out the secret gatherings of Nonconformist worshippers, the favourable odds were great. Of course, all the ordinary legal machinery was at their beck and call. But they had powerful and zealous helpers in many who made it their business to take the initiative in detective and police work, particularly in many of the old Cavaliers who had come to their own again as the King had come to his, and who were more than glad of the chance to cut something of a dashing figure once more. Sir Thomas Bridges of Keynsham in the west, taking fire as he heard of a conventicle held at a farmer's house about eight miles from Bath, where "there were assembled, as my intelligencer assures me, above three hundred persons from Bristol and several parts of the country," wrote off to London for permission to use and pay soldiers in the glorious cause—"a troop at a time, and relieve them after a week's duty in the service of marching up and down and hovering about those places where the Sectaries are most numerous."[1] The required permission arrived, to be acted upon with zeal; and, although after a little while the King's private feelings of leniency towards Nonconformists moved him, as we learn from a later letter, to have Sir Thomas called before the Council and warned that he was going too far,[2] the incident shows what strong allies the vigilance of the magistrates

[1] Waddington quotes the whole letter (*Congregational History*, ii. 580-582).

[2] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 287. The letter shows that Sir Thomas renewed his offer of service, notwithstanding the reproof he had sustained.

could command. Sir Thomas's reference to "my intelligencer" points to a still more valuable, and a far more odious, kind of assistance on which the authorities might count. Throughout the whole of this period informers were hard at work, scenting out Nonconformist meetings, ingratiating themselves, Judas-like, with Nonconformists in order that they might afterwards betray them, or, when all other methods failed, fathering treasonable plots by means of forged letters and kindred devices upon those against whom a conviction was desired. Sometimes they endeavoured to entrap a known Nonconformist into a real rebellion scheme :[1] sometimes they laid an information against a person on the ground that, hearing a preacher's voice in passing a certain house, they were persuaded that the voice was that of the person whose freedom they swore away ;[2] and Crosby has given us an instance of their machinations in the case of William Kiffin, the wealthy Baptist who stood high in Charles's favour, to whom they sent a letter (in order that they might have it intercepted on its way) "directing him to be ready with his friends at a certain time."[3] In Kiffin's case the device came to nothing ; but this kind of thing, so welcome were its real or spurious results to those who hated the sectaries with perfect hatred, flourished from the first, though one would suppose that such denunciations as those which its foulness drew from Owen's indignation might well have sentenced it to its deserved infamy in the eyes of all right-minded men. With the express sanction which the Five Mile Act and the second Conventicle Act gave to the informer's trade, in granting him a third of the fines,[4] it of course flourished still more. "Men of sharp wit, close countenances, pliant tempers, and deep dissimulation," Ellwood calls those who plied it,[5] as well he might. Truly, in any business of hide-and-seek between Nonconformity and the hostile authorities, the odds were heavily against Nonconformity's chance of success.

But spite of all the disadvantages under which they

[1] For an instance, see *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 362.

[2] *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports* (*Kenyon MS.* p. 91).

[3] *History of the English Baptists*, iii. 5 ; Ivimey, *Life of Kiffin*, pp. 41-43.

[4] *Supra*, p. 61.

[5] *Life of Ellwood* (ed. Graveson), p. 235.

laboured, Nonconformists maintained themselves and their assemblies, and their fiery trial did but confirm their determination not to yield. If now and then one catches a note of discouragement, as when Hooke writes that "the people of God are very sad, not knowing what to do or whither to go,"[1] the note never becomes one of utter despair, and certainly never passes into one of surrender. Even the foes of the captured worshippers saw upon their prisoners' faces a light reflected from that true martyr-spirit which counts it a privilege to carry the cross. "Sending them to prison does little good," one confesses, "they glory in their sufferings."[2] And in some cases prison meant suffering indeed. The cruelty of jailers—who sometimes vindictively added "stinking rooms," deprivation of bedding and food, striking with "staff and naked falchion," and "many more inhuman and seldom heard of cruelties and incivilities," to a penalty already far from light—made the burden sorer for not a few.[3] To some, imprisonment brought death, either actually within the prison walls or—as with Henry Jessey who, deprived under the Act of 1660 of that Stepney Rectory which he ought never to have held,[4] passed into the prison cell from which he emerged to die[5]—after release had been won. Others, like William Bridge of Yarmouth—one of the "Five Brethren" of earlier years[6]—had to endure a succession of appearances before hostile and threatening magistrates which must have meant a perpetual destruction of peace, and a trial perhaps more severe than imprisonment itself would have been.[7] Yet, though these things continued year by year, year by year also Nonconformist meetings went on, shifting from their first *locale* when it was discovered, but starting up again in a new hiding-place when the old one had been unearthed. One reads of worship being held in the open air, in woods and orchards, in bakers' shops, in underground recesses and vaults—such names as

1 Waddington, *Congregational History*, ii. 580.
2 *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1661–1662), p. 539.
3 *Ibid.* (1666–1667), preface, pp. xiv-xviii.
4 Vol. I. p. 386.
5 *Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, by E. W., pp. 84, 88 ff.
6 Vol. I. pp. 326, 329.
7 *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, Oct. 1668–Dec. 1669), pp. 95, 159, 278.

"Gospel Beech" and "Gospel Oak" remaining in witness of this old-time persecution upon the maps of to-day.[1] One reads of the precautions, so often futile, taken by the faithful—of a preacher who, standing outside a door whose top half was set on hinges, so that the room could be immediately concealed from any intruder ascending the stair, preached to an audience within the room itself[2]—of chambers used for worship being hidden by moving a great cupboard against the entrance—of a table being spread with food so that the religious gathering might at once, on emergency, be made to show the appearance of a feast.[3] In such instances as these one sees how the determination of the authorities to suppress the sectaries was met by an equal determination on the part of the sectaries not to be suppressed. The Quakers were equally resolved, and even more daring in showing their resolve. Upon them, since they refused to seek for cover, thus increasing both the anger of the authorities at what would naturally be considered their flaunting contumacy and the opportunities of punishing it, the lot fell still more hardly than upon the rest. The Quaker sufferers of the period make a veritable crowd; and the doom of transportation fell upon whole companies of men and women from town after town, if indeed death did not, as it often did, previous to their appearance before the magistrates, enter the prison to pronounce sentence of its own.[4] Their leaders set them an example of unflinching steadfastness; for Fox was imprisoned at Lancaster and Scarborough from 1663 to 1666:[5] his wife Margaret—whom, as wife to Judge Fell of Swarthmore Hall, we met at an earlier stage[6]—was sent to Lancaster Jail soon after her marriage to Fox in 1669, though this was not by any means her first taste of imprisonment for

[1] For various cases see Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 302-304, 310, 311, 321, 322.

[2] Slate, *Select Nonconformists' Remains*, p. 211. This was Thomas Jollie's device.

[3] See for these and for further references, Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, p. 52; also *Records of A Church of Christ Meeting at Broadmead, Bristol* (ed. Underhill, Hanserd Knollys Society), pp. 226 ff.

[4] Besse, *Sufferings of the Quakers*. In Besse's work the history is given under county headings.

[5] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), ii. 22, etc.

[6] Vol. I. p. 370.

the cause;[1] while others, like William Dewsbury, who commenced a durance which was to total up to nineteen years,[2] kept well abreast of these in the unyielding Quaker ranks which continued to smile defiance at hardest fate. It seemed as though with Quakerism, as with the other Nonconformists, persistent cutting did but make the plant grow the more. And in the end of all, although the endeavours of those Nonconformists who would have concealed themselves if they could were so frequently vain, and although the courage of those who refused to conceal themselves would, one might well suppose, have meant the annihilation both of them and of their cause, Nonconformity lived on. Contemporary letters bristle with such uncomplimentary, but significant, expressions as "crowds of fanatics" and "swarms of Nonconformists";[3] and the returns made to Sheldon's enquiries of 1669 show beyond doubt that up to that time persecution was far from having done what it set out to do.[4] It might have been evident, indeed, to discerning eyes that Nonconformity had entered far too deeply into the nation's life to be eradicated by the severest surgery of law. Only there were few eyes to see clear, and it was fated that the surgery should still for a time go on.

It should perhaps be noted that during the whole of the period there were variations both in the lot of individual Nonconformists and in the general intensity of persecution in different places and at different times. To some few of the men whose names have been mentioned at an earlier stage of this history, fate was kind, putting them beyond the necessity of considering repressive Acts or their consequences at all. If we cannot quite say this of John Owen (for he was indicted at Oxford under the first Conventicle Act in 1665, though he escaped imprisonment[5]) we can at least say that he was fairly well supplied with money, and therefore able to live in comfort;[6] and Toombes, the Baptist protagonist, having

[1] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), ii. 29, 120, 140.
[2] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 498.
[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1667), pp. 428, 454, 455.
[4] *Supra*, p. 61. [5] Orme, *Memoirs of Owen*, p. 306.
[6] Owen had probably saved money during his tenure of the Deanery of Christ Church, Oxford; and he published many books. For his increased prosperity still later, see *infra*, p. 97.

married a wealthy widow, found the lines falling to him in equally pleasant places at Salisbury.[1] On the other hand, John Goodwin—who, besides sharing in all the disadvantages suffered by Nonconformity in general, had been specially obnoxious to Restoration loyalty as the author of a defence of Charles the First's execution, and had under the Act of Indemnity been declared incapable of holding any position of trust, being indeed fortunate in escaping with his life—sank into obscurity, and, if an inscription in an existing register may be taken to refer to him, ended his days (1665) as a "vitler" in the parish where he had ministered so long.[2] On the passing of the Five Mile Act, some few ministers (John Howe among them) secured themselves by taking the oath it required;[3] to which proceeding, however, Baxter could not bring himself—he preferring to retire to Acton, where his preaching, and the growth of his congregation, involved him in a brief imprisonment in 1669.[4] So did men's fortunes vary. The differing moods and tempers of the authorities in different places of course affected the degree of trouble which Nonconformists had to endure. Some of the magistrates shared the spirit of Pepys who, as he saw "several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle" and noticed that "they go like lambs, without any resistance," wished that "they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be catched!"[5]; and while in some districts the magistrates and jurymen emulated the previously-noted severity of Sir Thomas Bridges,[6] in others they were slow—culpably slow as was now and then muttered—at the work they should have loved.[7] The knowledge of the King's desires in the matter was, naturally enough, not without its effect. Such interviews as we have seen the King having with the Presbyterian leaders[8] told their tale to an observant country plainly enough; and that it was not only the Presbyterians, but sectaries of the less

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography*; Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iv. 441.
[2] Jackson's *Life of Goodwin*, p. 393; "Vitler" is of course "victualler"—*i.e.* the keeper of an eating-house.
[3] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. p. 13.
[4] *Ibid.* part iii. pp. 7, 11, 48 ff.
[5] *Diary* (ed. Wheatley, 1904), iv. 210. [6] *Supra*, p. 65.
[7] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663–1664), p. 295.
[8] *Supra*, pp. 49, 60, 61.

reputable type, whom Charles was disposed to favour, was shown by his kindly bearing towards the Independent Nye in the conversation already alluded to,[1] and by his maintenance of that same kindly bearing in another conversation with Thomas Goodwin, Nye, and two others of "our Congregational brethren" in June 1663.[2] Indeed, Charles himself made a strenuous interference with legal process now and then—as in the case of Calamy who, having been imprisoned for preaching at St. Mary's, Aldermanbury, was released by royal order after a confinement of no more than a week.[3] With the movement of time, as well as with change of place, the degree of persecution rose and fell. The self-denying activity of Nonconformist ministers at the time of the Plague and the Fire[4]—misinterpreted as we have seen it might be in some quarters[5]—could not but modify somewhat the anti-Nonconformist mood of at any rate a few; while the political situation with its variations was not without its effect, Bristol's abortive attempt at the impeachment of Clarendon, and Clarendon's actual fall later on—since these things put the whole position in suspense—at the same time increasing the hope and courage of the Nonconformists themselves and diminishing the rancorous hostility, or at least the manifestation of it, of some of their foes.[6] The lapsing of the first Conventicle Act, too, was, as might be supposed, the signal for a fresh lifting-up of Nonconformity's head.[7] Times of slackness were, however, invariably followed by times when persecution sought through greater severity to make up what it had lost: each of the oppressive Acts whose passing we have chronicled produced a fresh outburst of zeal and a consequent drop-back of Nonconformity down the few steps of hope which it had in the preceding interval of partial truce contrived to climb; and thus, with recurring but never long-

[1] *Supra*, p. 49.

[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, ii. 579, 580.

[3] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1663-1664), p. 10; *Diary of Rev. Ralph Josselin* (ed. E. Hockcliffe, Royal Historical Society), p. 142.

[4] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. pp. 2, 19. For some examples see Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iii. 332–337, 355, 356.

[5] *Supra*, p. 54.

[6] It is to the time of Clarendon's fall that some of the complaints of "swarms of Nonconformists" (*supra*, p. 69) belong.

[7] Baxter remarks on the increase of his own congregation when the Act expired (*Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. p. 46).

enduring intervals of comparative quietude, with alternations which at their utmost only swung between slightly less and slightly more, the harassing of Nonconformity went on until at the passing of the second Conventicle Act it broke away from all restraint and set itself to do its worst.

For if the earlier persecutions had been hot upon the Nonconformists, the persecution which followed the passing of the second Conventicle Act plunged them into a furnace heated seven times. It is unnecessary to multiply details: practically the whole story is told in saying that incidents such as those we have seen taking place before were repeated in larger numbers and in more aggravated form. Again and again the meetings of the sectaries were invaded and the worshippers dragged before magistrates who had settled both judgment and penalty in their own minds beforehand. Only as a matter of form were cases submitted to the juries on which the issue nominally depended;[1] for any jury that dared to acquit—as did a jury before which the Quakers Penn and Mead were tried[2]—was promptly called to account and fined. Severe as the law was, it was strained to a severity beyond its original intent. Distraints were in many instances carried to a point far beyond what fines required, and no redress could be obtained. "They distrained from Richard White as many brass kettles, with a still, which were worth £10 : 13s., though his fine was but £3 : 15s."[3] "From one farmer they took six cows, which, at a moderate computation, were worth more than double the fines charged on him; and when the sufferer expressed his surprise that persons acquainted with the value of cattle should make such unreasonable distress, the informer replied, 'We take one for your sauciness and another for our trouble.'"[4] One may mention, however, that in some places—as at Bristol—a good deal of sympathy was felt with the sufferers, "and none would buy the goods distrained."[5] The streets of the

[1] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1670), p. 431.

[2] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 281-294. The jury found Mead "not guilty," and Penn "guilty of preaching to an assembly in Gracechurch Street." But they would not say that the assembly was "unlawful."

[3] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, ii. 250.

[4] Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, i. 290.

[5] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1670), p. 433.

capital saw rioting occasioned by the interference of "the train bands in the city, and soldiery in Southwark and suburbs" with religious meetings of Nonconformist type. And "the Lieutenancy having got orders to their mind, pick out the innocentest of the whole party, to show their power on."[1] If we let our eyes range over the country, they fall upon many happenings whereof those at Nottingham may be taken as the type. The Nottingham Independent Church was forced to abandon its meetings in the town, and to link itself with the fellowship at the neighbouring village of Sutton, even so only a partial safety being gained. "Our meetings were disturbed, and we forced to meet as we could in the night or at two or three o'clock in the morning. We were glad of a quiet meeting at any time."[2] Upon Baptists and Quakers everywhere a similar fate, or a worse one, descended.[3] In some districts—for instance in the diocese of Salisbury, where Bishop Seth Ward was hot upon the trail—business was seriously crippled by the driving away of Nonconformist workers.[4] But indeed, if the reader will picture both secular and ecclesiastical authorities using every engine they possessed, and at the same time putting their ingenuity to utmost stretch in the invention of fresh ones, for the extermination of the Nonconformist heresies—if he will with his mind's eye see informers increasing in numbers and becoming more practised in their subtle cunning and craft—if he will imagine packed or coerced juries, brow-beaten prisoners, brutal magistrates and sheriffs, with often an applauding populace as chorus to it all—he will behold things as they were, and will realise, without needing to feel

[1] Andrew Marvell to William Ramsden (*Works*, ed. Grosart, ii. 349, 350).

[2] *Minute Book of Castle Gate Congregational Church, Nottingham.* See also A. R. Henderson's *History* of that Church, pp. 66-71.

[3] See Crosby, as former note, ii. 244-264. Taylor, as former note, i. book ii. chap. 2; Ivimey, *History of English Baptists*, i. 364-378; Sewel, as former note, ii. 275 ff.

[4] *Life of Seth, Bishop of Salisbury*, by Walter Pope, pp. 67-69. Pope, however, minimises the matter. See also, for a sample of Ward's eagerness to have the Conventicle Act enforced, a letter summarised in *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1670), p. 424. There were other zealous episcopal detectives, for instance Parker of Oxford, whom Marvell rebukes and satirises in *The Rehearsal Transprosed* (*Works*, ed. Grosart, vol. iii.). But some of the Bishops were of a quite different spirit, and regretted the whole miserable business. For Wilkins of Chester, see *Life of Adam Martindale* (Chetham Society), p. 196.

any fear lest fancy should have outrun reality, the fiery trial through which Nonconformity had to pass. Thus, after the second Conventicle Act had become law in 1670, did malice and hatred and all uncharitableness work their riotous will unchecked till Charles, despairing of obtaining his much-desired dispensing power by milder ways, attempted his crowning stroke in the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672.

Circumstances, both at home and abroad, had combined to make what seemed a favourable opportunity. Into the complicated matter of Charles's arrangements, as embodied in the Treaty of Dover, with the French King, we need not enter.[1] So far as our immediate subject is concerned, it will suffice to say that in return for his promised help in France's war against Holland (the war actually began in March 1672) Charles was to receive an annual subsidy of two hundred thousand pounds; and through this source of income he was rendered so far independent, at least temporarily, of the English House of Commons that Parliament did not meet from April 1671 to February 1673. The Cabal ministry was for the most part on his side, and for various reasons inclined to give Nonconformity some relief. Some of its members did shrink from the autocratic method which Charles had decided upon; and Bridgeman, in particular—though it is not the case, as has been often stated, that he gave up the seals rather than affix them to the Declaration[2]—hesitated long before he could screw his courage to the necessary point. But as to the desirability of slackening the Nonconformists' fetters, all were at one. On the whole, Charles might well take this to be the moment of high-tide, and feel himself justified in launching his vessel on its adventurous career. If he were ever going to assert, as a right inherent in his kingship, that right of dispensation which Parliament had refused both to his direct request and to his half-veiled suggestion, now surely was the time.

The Declaration of Indulgence bore date March 15,

[1] For references concerning the Treaty, see *supra*, p. 6.

[2] The error starts with Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 553. Bridgeman's actual resignation came eight months later on a quite different matter (North's *Examen*, pp. 38, 39).

1672.[1] Its principal provisions, in brief, are these. The King declares his love for the Church of England, recalls the many proofs of that love which he has already given, observes that penal legislation against Nonconformists has borne very little fruit and is therefore shown to be a mistake, suspends the whole of this legislation in a sentence, and then goes on to indicate what is to be put in its place. This—the more positive side of the matter—is as follows. A certain number of places will be allowed "for the use of such as do not conform to the Church of England, to meet and assemble in order to their public worship and devotion": both the place of worship and the "teacher" must be duly certified: Roman Catholics may meet in their own houses only, and must not suppose that any certification either of "teachers" or "places" will fall to their share; and preaching in the licensed places must keep strictly clear of anything in the nature of sedition and of anything "to the derogation of the discipline or government of the established church." So was Charles's bold bid for the coveted dispensing power made. It was subtly planned and cleverly carried through. For looked at superficially, it was a vindication of the oppressed against their oppressors, the giving of the oil of joy for mourning and of the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, the opening of the prison to them that were bound. We know the secret spring at the back of Charles's mind. But it is little wonder that then many did not know—or even that many refused to know. If only they declined to entertain any question of the motives prompting it or the constitutional objections lying against it, the Declaration of Indulgence might well seem to harassed Nonconformists like the sudden thrusting forth of a hand from heaven, through a sky all black before, for the confounding and scattering of their foes.

By the majority of Nonconformists it was so received. Some, indeed, hesitated, among the reasons for hesitancy being the suspicious fact that the Declaration to some extent benefited Roman Catholic as well as Protestant dissidents, the consideration that it brought with it no guarantee of

[1] For a full report of it, see Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iv. 407-409; Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, pp. 76-78.

permanence, and—this weighing specially with some of the Presbyterians—the limitation of the range of indulgence in that it applied only to ministers and places of worship to be specifically named. It followed from this latter condition that while Presbyterians might meet for worship, the setting up of the Presbyterian ecclesiastical system was as far off as ever; and to "turn flat Independents," as Philip Henry put it[1] (which was what action consequent upon acceptance of the Indulgence would mean) was by no means to the taste of all. In some Nonconformist quarters feeling was acute enough to bring about a pamphlet war, not without sharpness, on the question of accepting or rejecting the royal boon.[2] But in the eyes of most the gift was too dazzling to be declined. Even the leading Presbyterians brought their gratitude on the wings of a glad deputation to the King's feet:[3] Philip Nye scouted the notion that anything in the opinions of Independency rendered it impossible to receive "the fruit and benefit of the King's majesty's favour":[4] on behalf of the Independents generally John Owen voiced abounding joy;[5] while some enthusiasts declared that under the favour which the King had conferred upon them they could not but consider his Majesty as "the breath of their nostrils, a repairer of their breaches, and a restorer of paths to dwell in."[6] Only the Quakers, as they had refused to pay persecution the compliment of hiding from it before, declined to pay the Indulgence the compliment of profiting by it now, and without applying for any licences under the scheme simply held on their course. They benefited in other ways, however, by the King's mood; for Charles—his general leniency towards the Quakers, noted before,[7] having been increased by the recently acquired knowledge that his

[1] *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p. 250. See also *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. pp. 99-101.

[2] Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, pp. 87, 88.

[3] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 555.

[4] See Nye's tract, *The King's Authority in Dispensing with Ecclesiastical Laws asserted and vindicated.* This was not publicly circulated, however, till 1687, when Nye's son Henry printed it in gratitude for the Indulgence of King James.

[5] Orme, *Memoirs of Owen*, pp. 356-358; *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1671–1672), p. 609.

[6] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1671–1672), p. 272.

[7] *Supra*, p. 43.

successful flight to France in days of darkest fortune had been in part due to Richard Carver, a man who had since joined the Society of Friends—pardoned on the intercession of George Whitehead all the then imprisoned Quakers whose offences had been committed against himself alone.[1] It should be added that when Whitehead's plea for his co-religionists was known to have been successful, other Nonconformists applied for similar grace, Whitehead himself urging them on; and in the result the names of a good many prisoners besides Quakers—that of John Bunyan among them—stood in the general pardon which Whitehead's persuasiveness had evoked.[2] The great mass of Nonconformists, in brief, ran with eager feet and clamorously-cheering voices towards the door which the King's Declaration had set wide. Licences of three varieties—for particular places, for preachers in particular places, and for "unattached" preachers (these last being free to preach in any of the "particular places")—were asked for and issued in great numbers, the total number reaching no less than three thousand five hundred within ten months.[3] The majority of the personal licences were issued to Presbyterian preachers, very many of the licencees having been among the ejected of 1662: Independents and Baptists, however, made a goodly show; and many of the leading names we have met with in the course of the history—for example, those of Baxter, Nye, Thomas Goodwin, Philip Henry, Manton and Bunyan—confront us upon the lists. The licensed "places" were generally private houses or single rooms in private houses, but sometimes out-buildings and barns: here and there the putting up of special meeting-places for worship gave evidence of Nonconformist hopefulness that a new era had

[1] Whitehead's *Christian Progress*, pp. 350-359; Tuke's *Memoirs of Whitehead*, ii. 39 ff.; *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, 1671–1672), pp. 489, 490. For the incident of Richard Carver, see the Introduction to the *Pilgrim's Progress* (ed. Offor, 1884).

[2] Tuke's *Memoirs of Whitehead*, ii. 50 note; Brown, *Life of Bunyan* (ed. 1887), pp. 187-189. The Declaration was, of course, not retrospective, and special measures were required for the release of persons already in jail.

[3] A complete list is in Bate's *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, Appendix vii. Appendix vi. gives the three licence-forms. See also Lyon Turner's volumes, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity under Persecution and Indulgence.*

already begun ;[1] while the first church built "*more ecclesiarum*"—"supported by a row of pillars with arches"—came into being during the Indulgence time.[2] By activity in other directions Nonconformity celebrated the breaking of its bonds. With a confident look towards the future, it began to make more formal provision for the perpetuation of its ministry than it had hitherto been able to do, the first public Nonconformist ordination service taking place at Manchester in October.[3] It is worth noting—as indicative of the union, or at any rate the close association, which was being forced by circumstances upon Presbyterians and Independents—that in this service ministers of both persuasions took part. The same association held good in respect of a Lecture—still continuing under the title of the "Merchants' Lecture"—which, it was arranged, was to be delivered weekly in defence of the Protestant religion, four Presbyterians and two Independents taking turns, at Pinners' Hall.[4] Nonconformity was clearly bent upon stretching its opportunity to the utmost, and working while it was called to-day. Its ways were not altogether ways of pleasantness, even now, nor its paths wholly paths of peace; for it was still possible for magistrates to find excuses for condemnation if they so desired, on the ground that Nonconformists took more than had been granted, or on the ground of some technical flaw.[5] It was still more easily possible to find some reason for holding certain places unsuitable for Nonconformist gatherings, and for a consequent refusal of licences; and in respect of a good many large buildings this was done.[6] It was quite easy for Bishops, Vicars, and their agents to hit upon pretexts for harassing Nonconformists who availed themselves of the Indulgence, for claiming Church dues to the uttermost of arrears[7] (to name but one thing), and for many other ventings of spite. Some of the clergy and their supporters,

[1] Bate, as previous note, p. 95, instances seventeen in Lancashire alone.

[2] Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodensis*, p. 4.

[3] Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, p. 397; Halley, *Lancashire, Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, ii. 249, 250.

[4] Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. p. 103. But according to Baxter, the Presbyterian-Independent harmony was disturbed from the beginning.

[5] See, for examples and references to authorities, Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, pp. 101-103.

[6] *Ibid.* p. 96.

[7] Heywood, *Autobiography, Diaries, etc.*, i. 346.

indeed, were alarmed beyond measure at the unsuspected strength of Nonconformity as the new conditions revealed it. "The orthodox poor clergy are out of heart," the Bishop of Lincoln wailed;[1] and another mourner—not a clergyman, however—declared that "our episcopal congregations look very thin."[2] It is not surprising that those who contended for the Established Church monopoly in religious affairs should have shown both fear and wrath. Show them they certainly did. It was under the startled anger and the lowering frowns of men who would not reconcile themselves to the loss of their prey that Nonconformists had to seize and bear away their treasure: if a feast had been spread for them, it was in the presence of their enemies still; and even though they had been brought out into a comparatively large place, they were every now and then made painfully aware that hostile hands were itching to thrust them back into their close cells again. Nevertheless, putting on a cheerful courage, and with only an occasional side-glance toward the shadows where ugly possibilities lurked,[3] they pressed on all the strenuous activities whereof mention has been made. If their tenure of freedom was precarious, they shut their eyes to the fact, and bore themselves as if the world had been won.

But this could not be the end. It was not likely that the King's action would be permitted to go unchallenged, or that the Commons, when they met again (and the ever-pressing money-question made their meeting only a question of time) would quietly acquiesce in the royal assumption of a power which they had consistently refused to yield up. Apart from the question of what Parliament might think or do, there was in various quarters a good deal of ominous shaking of the head; and some who said but little showed by the way in which they said that little that they would have said more had they dared. In a "Report on the Religious Condition of London in 1672," by "An Impartial

[1] *Calendar of State Papers* (Domestic Series, May–Sept. 1672), p. 589.

[2] *Ibid.* (Domestic Series, Oct. 1672–Feb. 1673), p. 300. The author of this complaint was Sir G. Shakerley.

[3] See on this *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry*, p. 253. Henry thinks the whole thing may end in a massacre, "it being now known where such people may be met with, as if they all had but one neck."

Outsider,"[1] the King is warned to keep an anxious eye upon the Dissenters if he indulge them; and "rude, saucy, unmannerly" are the epithets which the writer thinks the Quakers specially deserve. But it was of course from the Commons that the chief remonstrance might be expected to come. The constitutional point as to whether the King might suspend the law of the realm was indeed not so clear as it is now:[2] weighty utterances in favour of the possibility of such suspension could be adduced; but not many pages of the book of history had been turned since the reign of Charles the First; and what the exercise of the royal prerogative had led to in his case was enough to make men realise keenly the danger it held. Besides the constitutional problem, there was the steadily-growing idea that Romanism was the King's real faith, and that the Declaration of Indulgence was really the beginning of its re-establishment, the fact that the Declaration relegated Catholicism to a sort of second-class favour being no more than a blind. Even the prelates instituted an anti-Popery crusade;[3] and in 1680 Stillingfleet still held that the whole policy of general toleration had really been a move in a serious Roman Catholic intrigue.[4] A multitude of pamphlets, moreover, kept suspicion alert in the popular mind, and diffused the terror of Catholicism over the land. It was to be anticipated that when Parliament assembled, the Declaration of Indulgence would be the matter on which its members would immediately and eagerly fall, and that Parliament's mood in respect of it would be one of bitterness and wrath.

So it proved. February 5, 1673, was the date of Parliament's reassembling. March 7 saw the Declaration of Indulgence cancelled, the King thus admitting defeat. During the intervening period there had been much re-

[1] Printed by G. Lyon Turner in *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, iii. 192-205.

[2] On the whole question of the dispensing or suspending power, see Amos, *The English Constitution in the Time of Charles the Second*, pp. 19-24.

[3] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 555.

[4] *The Mischief of Separation*, p. 59; specially the note containing a quotation from Baxter. *The Secret History of the Courts of Charles II. and James II.* (p. 66) says, "By all which it was plain that the King did all that lay in his power toward the advancement of popery and slavery, but that still his luck was nought."

crimination between throne and Commons, recrimination more or less decently veiled, but sharp-edged none the less: there had been hesitancies and procrastinations on the King's part, half resolves towards desperate courses followed by compliance and collapse; but the issue had never really been in doubt. The details of the brief but animated wrangle need not be given in anything but the barest summary here.[1] What calls for notice, however, in order to a right understanding of the position, is the mingling, in the Commons' temper, of a desire to grant to the Nonconformists by legislative process some measure of relief with their stern resolve that no such relief must be accorded as a mere gift from the royal grace. Once again it must be remarked that the idea of toleration was making headway within the general mind, and this will in part account for the new breadth shown in the parliamentary debates of the year. But what weighed most with the House was probably the feeling that by passing an enactment which pointed in the direction of Nonconformist liberty it might engage Nonconformist feeling upon its own side, and thus, putting an end to the community of hardship under which both Nonconformists and Romanists lay, might secure the first as an ally against the second and against the King's supposed Roman Catholic designs. At any rate, the Commons flung themselves with ardour upon a threefold aim. The Declaration must be annulled. Against the Romanist peril and against the possibility of packing all the official posts of the country with Romanist nominees, special safeguards must be provided—the Test Act being the barrier set up against this enemy's suspected approach. And the Nonconformists, at the moment when the King was being compelled to recall his gift to them, were to find Parliament generously making up the loss. All three objects were concurrently pursued—the proceedings for the attainment of the last two being initiated, in fact, at no longer interval than that of a day. On February 27 the Commons passed resolutions which became the basis of a Relief and Comprehension Bill; and on March 17 the Bill was through, its provisions permitting

[1] The course of the dispute may be traced in Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, pp. 106-123.

Nonconformists who would take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, at the same time subscribing the doctrinal articles of the Established Church, to meet for worship without incurring any penalty, and promising a licence to Nonconformist preachers if they took the same oaths and made the same subscription at quarter-sessions.[1] Also, since the clause of the Act of Uniformity which required "assent and consent" to the entire contents of the Prayer Book was to be repealed, the possibility of Comprehension seemed to streak the sky once more. On February 28 the Commons passed a resolution for depriving all Roman Catholics of military and civil office;[2] but this was only a beginning, and soon the "Test Act" was ready for the Lords, with its demand that any person holding civil or military office under the Crown must take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, must receive the Lord's Supper according to the Church of England rites, and must unequivocally declare that he held transubstantiation false.[3] So far the Commons had made quick work. In the Upper House, however, the fate of the two Bills was not the same. The Relief Bill was lost in the end owing to disagreements between the Houses—the Lords were anxious, among other things, to introduce a clause virtually bringing back that "dispensing power" which the Commons were anxious to kill—disagreements still unsettled when prorogation came.[4] The Test Act had fairer fortune, and received the royal assent on March 29,[5] producing among its immediate effects an acknowledgment of Roman Catholicism from James, the King's brother and the heir to the throne, and a consequent resignation of his office as Lord High Admiral of the Fleet.[6] So far as Nonconformists were concerned, the passing of the Test Act of course put upon some of them—certainly upon all for whom any matter of conscience was involved in communicating according to the Church of England order—

[1] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, iv. 575.
[2] *Journals of the House of Commons*, ix. 260.
[3] For the text of the Act, see Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement, etc.*, pp. 499-507.
[4] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xii. 576, 579, 580; *Journals of the House of Commons*, ix. 271-281.
[5] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xii. 584.
[6] Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), i. 224.

an additional disability over and above those they already endured, and a disability moreover, for whose removal Nonconformity had many years to wait. And, indeed, the net result of the Commons' action, whatever their intentions may have been, was simply to thrust Nonconformity back into the horrible pit and the miry clay out of which the King, however unconstitutionally, had temporarily dragged it. For while the debates upon the Relief Bill and the Test Act had been going on, the controversy concerning the cancelling of the Declaration of Indulgence had also pursued its way; and here the Commons had their will. From the firm stand taken up in their address to the Crown—"we feel ourselves bound in duty to inform your Majesty that penal statutes, in matters ecclesiastical, cannot be suspended but by Act of Parliament"[1]—they never wavered. Charles might delay an answer to their representations—they only debated whether a further request for a speedy response should be sent immediately or after two days' grace.[2] Charles might assure them that by the exercise of his power he intended no hurt to the Church of England—they only remarked that his Majesty's reply was "not sufficient to clear the apprehensions that may justly remain in the minds of your people, by your Majesty's having claimed a power to suspend penal statutes in matters ecclesiastical."[3] From the main issue they declined to turn their eyes. So firmly fixed, indeed, was their purpose, that persistence on the King's part would have brought about a situation serious in the highest degree, a situation in which more than "dispensing power" might have been lost; and Charles—the memory of his father's fate being upon him to incline his heart to understanding—was wise in time. As has been stated, March 7 brought the end of the conflict, and Charles threw down the weapon which he had so long desired to wield, and of whose manipulation he had had an experience so short-lived. And more than the brief struggle over the Declaration was ended. The longer struggle which had begun immediately after the passing of the Act of Uniformity was ended too. Charles had sought, by direct request, by subtle manœuvre, by open

[1] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, iv. 527.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 542-546.
[3] *Ibid.* iv. 551.

action, to obtain that power of Indulgence which would at the same time have gratified his autocratic spirit and enabled him to show favour to his Roman Catholic friends; and he had been baffled at every turn. And now the closing of the long and complicated battle, in which the issues of good and evil had been so strangely mixed, found Parliament with the unimpaired right of saying "yea" or "nay" in religious affairs, as in others, to the appeal of the individual conscience, as well as to the appeal of the common good, still its own—found the Established Church the one religious association on whose behalf the power of saying "yea" was employed—and found both Parliament and the Established Church saying a strenuous "nay" to Nonconformity of every shape and shade. Over Nonconformity's head, in brief, the sword hung and swung as threateningly as at any time since Nonconformity began.

The entire period we have just been surveying was thus for Nonconformity one of desperate struggle against foes who sought to slay it, and in the fight for mere life practically all the energies of Nonconformity were absorbed. One naturally enquires as to any processes of development and internal self-adjustment that Nonconformity may have simultaneously gone through; and besides, that dominant question of which all through our study of Nonconformist history we are conscious as lying behind the history itself—the question as to the relation of Nonconformist history to the Nonconformist spirit and ideal, as to the degree in which the history itself embodies, or helps or hinders the embodiment of, that spirit and ideal—cannot but present itself in regard to these years of critical fate. In regard to the first enquiry, there is not much more to say than that the hot struggle for life allowed internal development but scanty chance; and in regard to the second, a closer examination of the matter will be more easily possible at a somewhat later stage. For the struggle for bare existence had still a good many years to run; and the passing of the Toleration Act will serve as a good vantage point whence to look before and after in the indicated respect. One or two matters may nevertheless be here set down, partly as showing what inner

development was possible to some sections of Nonconformity in the dark days, and partly as bearing upon the relations between the Nonconformist spirit and concrete Nonconformity's tale.

That Nonconformity had made its struggle for life harder by the laxity with which it had at an earlier time held to the true Nonconformist ideal, is evident enough. We have remarked before that suspicions concerning Nonconformity's loyalty to the throne were constantly being expressed;[1] nor can the fact excite surprise. Its former identification, not only with the cause of religious freedom as Cromwell had championed it, but with the entire political system which Cromwell had established, had been so complete that its present repudiation of any necessary connection with that political system naturally rang hollow in the ears of many; and although in that repudiation Nonconformity was only returning to a truer apprehension and expression of its own essential spirit, opponents could not be blamed for asking why Nonconformity had not found this out before. The question of allowing to the Nonconformists room within the borders of the reconstituted State was accordingly not faced or argued on its merits, and Nonconformity had to fight against a hostility based upon misunderstandings for which it had itself given only too much cause. In other ways, too, Nonconformity had obscured its own principles, and thereby made its re-assertion of those principles appear like a device hit upon to meet changed conditions rather than like its native speech. Its participation in the religious arrangements of Cromwell's rule had confused the issues sadly; and foes were ready enough to use the weapons which Nonconformity had sharpened for them to so keen an edge. Stillingfleet's *Mischief of Separation* was not altogether an easy book for Nonconformists to answer; for the fact that they had forsaken the "Brownists' principles, and had weakened their own case by identifying themselves with a State Church, is urged against them with much power."[2] The whole debate, in short, had got shifted from

[1] *Supra*, pp. 39-41, 52.

[2] See on this Fletcher, *The Revival and Progress of Independency in England*, iv. 229-231.

what ought to have been the main ground, Nonconformity being compelled to accept the transference of emphasis and to suffer the disadvantage it involved. We shall see by-and-by how this state of things, together with all the other conditions under which the struggle of this period was carried on, affected Nonconformity's own inner condition, and thus affected also the making of its future—how the consequences of its by-gone faithlessness to the true Nonconformist spirit became in their turn causes of a yet greater departure from the Nonconformist ideal. For the moment, we may be content, under this head, to note the indicated fact—that Nonconformity entered into and went through its fierce fight for life under Charles the Second handicapped with a weight it had mistakenly taken upon its shoulders, and which its enemies would not permit it to shake off.

For inner development and self-adjustment there was in the nature of things, as has been said, but little chance. Yet there is something to be told. One by no means insignificant matter demands mention in respect of Nonconformity of the Presbyterian and Independent types. Academies for the training of ministerial students began to be instituted in various places immediately after the ejectment of 1662, their establishment showing that a long look towards the future was not quite impossible even among the tribulations of the present.[1] The Academies were not large institutions like the theological Colleges of to-day: they were conducted by ministers in their own houses; but some of the ablest and most learned of the Nonconformist clergy—men like Richard Frankland and Theophilus Gale, the latter of whom is warmly eulogised for breadth and depth of learning by Wood[2]—gave themselves to this work; and that the instruction given was of no mean order is sufficiently shown by the warm praise of some who would perhaps rather have criticised if they could.[3] The importance of the Academies was recognised

[1] For early Academies, see Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), i. 297 ff.; *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, iii. 272, etc., iv. 41, etc.; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 499-501.

[2] "A person of great reading, an exact philologist, and a philosopher" (*Athenae Oxoniensis*, i. 1150).

[3] Robert Nelson, in his *Life of Bishop Bull* (ed. 1840, pp. 30-34) expresses the wish—evidently with Nonconformist seminaries in his mind—that the Church of England possessed similar institutions.

by Nonconformity's foes as well as by its friends, as the attack upon them in Queen Anne's reign, to be later noticed, amply proves. Passing from Independency and Presbyterianism (the union into which they were being driven of course resulted in the use of Academies by students of both orders [1]) to the Quakers, we find that they, too, though with them no question of perpetuating a ministry could arise, had under the suggestion of Fox turned their thoughts to educational affairs, and had established schools for both boys and girls.[2] But the most important thing in the Quaker history of the period—important because over and above its own intrinsic interest, it is significant for the relation of Quakerism to the Nonconformist ideal—is the in-coming, upon hitherto unorganised Quaker religion, of the organisation idea. We noted, in our dealing with Fox and with that spiritual experience of his out of which Quakerism came,[3] how Fox, while seeing clearly enough that in life and not in any organisation the true starting-point lay, did not see that life, though refusing to be *made by* organisation, needed to make an organisation for itself, and thus grasped only a part, not the whole, of the Nonconformist idea. But circumstances had awakened him to a sense of his mistake. Individualism had produced strange fruits in at least one instance; and there had been no available machinery to correct its excess. John Perrot had brought about a division in the Society—a division which, starting from what might appear the comparatively unimportant question whether the hat ought or ought not to be removed in prayer, had, as is the way of divisions of even smallest origin, come to threaten large and disastrous results.[4] Fox realised that in some form or other control of individual vagaries must be set up. The Perrot dispute began in 1661, and went on for years—though it is not necessary to follow it in detail—even after Perrot himself had disappeared from the scene. In 1666 Fox, his imprisonment at Scarborough ended, made a definite recommendation that "monthly meetings" should be set up

[1] There was no institution for the training of Baptist ministers till the reign of George the Second. *Infra*, p. 254.

[2] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), ii. 89. [3] Vol. I. p. 365.

[4] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), i. 519; Gough, *History of The Quakers*, i. 514-516.

in London "to take care of God's glory, and to admonish and exhort such as walked disorderly or carelessly, and not according to truth."[1] "Monthly meetings" we have already heard of at an earlier stage;[2] but thus to endow them with disciplinary functions was a new thing. Henceforward consciousness of the need for organisation was strong in Fox's mind, and the establishment of it all over the country became one of his principal concerns. Unfortunately, the change from perfect individualism to the restrictions implied in the new system could not be easily made, and was not readily accepted by all; and the close of the period we have surveyed found hot trouble on this score brewing in the Quaker ranks. Organisation had come; but its coming illustrated what has previously been said[3]—that when organisation does not arrive as the natural outcome of an inner experience, but under the pressure of emergency, its relations with and its adjustment to the inner experience are apt to go awry. It was not without influence, and harmful influence, upon the further history of Quakerism that such organisation as it adopted was adopted under the stress of circumstances instead of as the natural embodiment of life. This, however—as also the controversies to which Fox's new insistence upon discipline gave rise—we shall have to consider, or at least mention again, later on. For the moment, we note it principally as a fact of Quaker development in the dark days with which we have been concerned.

The history of dark days we have now to take up again—of dark days after the light-flash of the Declaration of Indulgence had swiftly crossed the skies and died.

Section 3

Through Persecution to Toleration

Authorities.—Burnet's *History of My Own Time* remains one of the principal sources of information. Airy's edition of this work does not, however, extend beyond the reign of Charles. After that references are to the edition of 1823. Reresby's *Memoirs* are useful. From 1678 onwards Luttrell's *Brief Relation of State Affairs 1678–1714* is a full compendium of information. Lin-

[1] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), ii. 80.
[2] Vol. I. p. 393.
[3] Vol. I. p. 366.

gard's *History of England* accompanies us down to the entrance of William and Mary upon the scene, and from the accession of James the Second onward we have Macaulay's *History of England* as a vivid record of events. For James, consult also Mackintosh's *History of the Revolution*. The special denominational *Histories* as before, though Collier's *Ecclesiastical History* ceases with the death of Charles. Stoughton's *History of Religion in England* is useful as ever. Books to which reference may be made on special points are mentioned in the footnotes.

So far as the fortunes of Nonconformity are concerned through the period from the cancelling of Charles's Declaration of Indulgence to the Toleration Act of 1689, the title given to this section is apt enough. It covers the ground, and says about Nonconformity practically everything there is to say. On the side of general national and political history, indeed, there are warring forces, subtle stratagems and policies, kaleidoscopic changes, in abundance. The secular historian has to tell of many happenings during the remainder of Charles the Second's reign—how Shaftesbury fell from favour and by-and-by climbed back only to fall again—how Danby kept up a strenuous and, at the end, a despairing fight for power (a fight not wholly selfish but inspired by a loyal desire to save the King from his own folly) between Shaftesbury's first fall and his return—how the King played off politician against politician, covering one lie with another as occasion called, in order to gain or regain or maintain his royal absolutism in highest possible measure—and how the King's secret relations and bargainings with France lay underneath the whole thing as a sort of invisible writing which only in fitful fragments sprang to light at the time. And the secular historian has, further, to tell how James the Second, infatuated in his Catholic passion, drove his chariot so recklessly that it was carried in the end headlong to disaster down the steep place which the charioteer had not possessed sense enough to foresee. But most of this—at any rate in respect of Charles's reign—save for such occasional references as due pursuit of our own line makes necessary, is outside our purpose here. It is Nonconformist history that is our concern. As to this, the sentence "through persecution to toleration" traces an outline ample enough to contain all that needs to be set down; and moreover the recital of the events that fill it may be summarised and short.

Taking first of all the later years of Charles's reign, we note that the direct influence of the King upon the fortunes of the Nonconformists—indeed upon religious affairs as a whole—was virtually at an end. It was at an end, if for no other reason, because Charles was content that it should be so. His great stroke had failed: his idea of securing favour for Romanism by means of a favour to dissenting religionists in general had melted away from his horizon as every effort to realise it had been found to break down; and religious affairs, since they had obstinately declined to serve Charles's purposes, were now petulantly bidden to go their own way and look after themselves. So far, Charles's mood had passed into a fresh phase. The love of absolutism—and it will be remembered that this had been one of the impelling forces behind Charles's tendency to toleration, the sequence of ideas in his mind being that general toleration would facilitate toleration of the Romanists, that toleration of the Romanists would obtain for him the sympathy and help of France, and that through the sympathy and help of France his progress towards autocracy would become more swift and sure[1]—the love of absolutism did indeed remain. But it had now to fulfil itself apart from a whole set of ideas which had been at its service before. Henceforward, for Charles, the religious problem was pushed behind the screen, as a stage "property" which could serve no further purpose in the development of the play. In so far as he did now and then come back upon religious affairs at all, it was out of a momentary impulse either of generosity or petulance that he did it; and the action in which the impulse embodied itself formed no item in the working out of any considered scheme. Of course, in striving to establish the absolutism of his own throne (though it must always be borne in mind that even this striving was carried on with that vacillation, and with that reluctance to stake all upon a final throw of the dice, into which Charles's indolent nature flung him) and in consolidating by anticipation the power of the brother who was to succeed him, Charles was really working in the ultimate interests of that Roman Catholicism so dear to James's heart. But this consequence was undesigned. It was absolutism

[1] *Supra*, p. 6.

not Roman Catholicism, in the furtherance of which Charles, during the later years of his reign, was engaged : with religious affairs, so far as special effort to mould them was concerned, he was done ; and Nonconformity, sharing in this respect the lot of religion as a whole, was to feel no more from Charles's hand any pressure expressive of a real personal desire to help or to harm.

It was therefore with the general mood of the nation that Nonconformity was left to settle its account. And during Charles's reign (after 1672 and 1673) the national mood passed through two stages. There was first a stage in which its dominant element was a dread of Catholicism and of the King's leanings towards it, a dread which was, as we know, no new thing, but which grew uncontrolled and passionate now as the very measures it took to lull itself only served to feed its fires. There was next a stage in which against this same dread of Catholicism a strong reaction came, and in which the nation, as if confessing abjectly that it had exhausted its energies in a foolish fight against shadows, turned with a revival of warm personal affection to the feet of the monarch on whom suspicion had been so unjustly flung. In both of its stages, this national temper made for Nonconformity's hurt. In the first stage, the idea (not at all an unfounded one, however unfounded suspicion of the King's larger Catholic designs might be) that the recent Declaration of Indulgence had favour to the Catholics for its ultimate purpose, naturally brought about an intensifying of hatred towards the Nonconformists who were its primary beneficiaries. There may appear to be some inconsistency in hating Nonconformists for their possession of a treasonable spirit and simultaneously hating them for being allies of the King. Even if it were so, it would be enough to say that popular emotion takes small account of inconsistencies. But, in point of fact, there was no inconsistency. It must be recollected that, whatever distrust and suspicion of Charles himself might exist, attachment to the monarchy as an institution never wavered from the Restoration onwards ; so that it was quite possible to oppose Nonconformity both for its supposed disloyalty to the throne and for its supposed alliance with the person who occupied it. In the second

stage of the nation's mood, the renewed stirring of affection for Charles, added to the abiding affection for the institution of the monarchy, supplied hostility to Nonconformity with power more than adequate to hold it at its previous level: there was but a change of fuel, not in any wise a quenching of the fire. It must be added, however, in order to make the summary complete, that the period of the nation's wild dread of Catholicism told somewhat less heavily against Nonconformity than did the period of the nation's intensified loyalty to the person of Charles—quite naturally so, since Nonconformity, even if it were being used by the suspected King for Catholic purposes, was of course known to be *religiously* as antipathetic to Catholicism as anyone could desire. Fear and hatred of Catholicism would tend in the long run—in fact did tend towards the close of the time of their prevalence—to diminish persecution of the Nonconformist sects. The return of attachment to Charles, on the other hand, with equal naturalness sent the temporarily checked steed whereon persecution rode bounding forward again. The final statement, consequently, runs thus—that, while in both its phases the national mood of these years told to Nonconformity's hurt, the note of wrath was during the earlier phase tending to sound somewhat less harshly, and during the later phase swelling to more threatening loudness again.

The necessary but brief recital of facts may be set down as follows. We begin, of course, with the period of the Catholic terror, running from 1672 to 1680 or 1681. The cancelling of the Declaration of Indulgence left the nation free, with the fit of Catholic fear upon it, to apply the standing penal laws against Nonconformity in all their force; and from 1673 to about 1680 persecution delivered its strokes with the motive indicated behind it. Whether the cancelling of the Declaration did actually carry with it the cancelling of the licences already out, was indeed a matter of debate for a while, strange as the fact may appear: some of the Nonconformists chose to assert that the privileges granted to particular men and places remained unaffected: the King himself to some extent countenanced the contention: justices in many places were perplexed,

some, indeed, being chidden for sentencing Nonconformists and some for letting them go free; and conflicting decisions were given.[1] But by February 1675 it was clear that this confused condition of affairs could not be suffered to continue; and Charles, realising that he had no alternative, issued an Order in Council to the effect—not that the licences were now to be withdrawn—but that they had "been long since recalled."[2] The frail shelter in which Nonconformity had hoped to hide itself was thus beaten down. But in reality it made little difference; for immediately upon the withdrawal of the Declaration persecution had been hotly renewed, to be fully maintained at its initial pitch up to about 1677, and thereafter, during the remainder of the Catholic panic, to slacken somewhat for a few years as a preliminary to flaming up again. In any case, whether persisting or slackening in its fierceness, it went on. True, recent events had made its task more difficult. Reresby takes the Declaration of Indulgence to have been "the greatest blow that ever was given, since the King's restoration, to the Church of England," and complains that "all the laws, and care of their execution, against the separatists afterwards, could not bring them back to due conformity."[3] But it did its best. Occupied with organising a direct attack upon, or a direct offence against, the Roman danger, Parliament and people were very willing, to say the least, that Nonconformity, tainted as Nonconformity was by its recent transactions with the King, should suffer the appointed doom. The direct attack upon, or defence against, Romanism was energetically pushed. People in the mass, indeed, were not far from a state of panic, and sped headlong into panic at last; and the mood of Parliament followed, if with rather slower steps, still with steps that were sure, in the wake of the people's mood. The fear of the people was shown by the fashion in which they leapt at every rumour, by the eager fashion in which they burnt effigies of the Pope in all

[1] On this whole matter, see Bate, *The Declaration of Indulgence, 1672*, pp. 130-141; also a letter from Sir Robert Southwell to Sir Leoline Jenkins and Sir Joseph Williamson, printed in *Letters addressed from London to Sir Joseph Williamson* (Camden Society), i. 33, 34.

[2] *His Majesty's Declaration for enforcing a late Order made in Council* (Feb. 12), p. 7.

[3] *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), p. 86.

the chief streets of London on the anniversary of the fifth of November plot,[1] and by the absurd estimates as to the prevalence of Catholicism which were repeated with unquestioning faith:[2] it was heightened by such statements as that circulated in 1675 to the effect that a Jesuit priest who had been converted to the Church of England had been set upon by Father St. Germain and three ruffians and forced at the poniard's point to abjure his new faith;[3] while over all lay the knowledge, which the passing of the Test Act had flashed home to every one, that the heir to the throne was a passionate adherent of the Roman way. Parliament by degrees gave to its weapons against Romanism a sharper edge. Shaftesbury, indeed, would have been content to set the Romanists free from the laws oppressing them, if they on their side would surrender any claim to public offices or to military employment or to appearance at Court.[4] But not many joined their voices to his; and as Parliament was bent rather upon increasing than diminishing Catholic disabilities, his generosity sank ineffectual and unheeded beneath the waves of the general distrust. We need not follow closely every attempt made in Parliament to embody the hatred of Popery which was, even if in varying measure, felt by both the Upper and the Lower Houses. Some of the efforts were abortive, and for a while little was actually done. The old disputes between Lords and Commons broke out again, the first still being less inclined to extreme severity than the second. When the Lords sent down to the Commons one Bill designed to safeguard national interests in case a Catholic sovereign should reign, and another designed to make prosecution of Catholics more effective and sure (some relief, however, being offered on Shaftesbury's suggested conditions to those who would pay for it), the Commons contemptuously threw out both,

[1] *State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles II.*, Nov. 5, 1673.

[2] Glanvill (*The Zealous and Impartial Protestant*, pp. 45, 46) complains of this as making Papists rate their own importance too highly. See *Journals of the House of Commons*, ix. 464 ff. for some alarmist reports.

[3] Reresby's *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), pp. 98, 99. But the name of the coercing Jesuit is here given as Burnet. Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 138, 139. *State Papers, Domestic Series, Charles II.*, Nov. 10, 1675.

[4] See his *Debate or Arguments for dissolving the present Parliament*, in Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*, iv. Appendix vii.

declaring that the first, so far from being a Bill against Popery, was really a Bill drawn in Popery's behalf.[1] In retaliation the Lords meted out similar treatment — or treatment even more contemptuous, inasmuch as any sort of consideration, even for the purpose of a negative, was refused—to an anti-Romanist Bill which the Commons sent up.[2] Presently, however, as we shall see, more decided action was to follow upon the uprising of a new Catholic scare.

Meanwhile, in this atmosphere of distrust which was rising up and wreathing itself round the throne, there was little pity for the Nonconformists who had so lately been the throne's *protegés* for a glowing but transient hour. They had gained nothing permanent by being temporarily drawn beneath Charles's sheltering wing, but they had to take consequences for having rested there. The anti-Nonconformist enactments found their prey and fell upon it tooth and claw. Once again the State papers record with cold pen how sectaries were "presented according to law": once again the old story of spies, informers, imprisonments, and fines, is told as it had been told, with hardly an intermission, since the glorious day of the Restoration dawned, and told with so little variation that we need enter into no details here;[3] and once again the authorities were egged on by fervent ecclesiastics, one of whom even advocated before the House of Commons the teaching of Dissenters by "setting fire to the faggot" and by "opening their eyes with gall."[4] It may be worth while to spare a moment's special glance at Ludovic Muggleton, who was tried at the Old Bailey in 1677 —if only because the sect he founded continues to this day. This curious individual had from the year 1650 onwards been claiming to have received special revelations as to the nature of the Divinity, as to the mortality of the soul, and even as to astronomical science; and his ideas, although

[1] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 153, 154.

[2] *Ibid.* ix. 154.

[3] The different denominational Histories quoted at different times may be consulted for particulars and instances.

[4] Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iv. 426. One hopes, of course, that as the second item of the procedure was obviously intended metaphorically, the first was also.

hardly deserving the contempt with which Macaulay alludes to them,[1] are grotesque enough. Muggleton had already suffered imprisonment in 1653, so that his appearance before the Court in 1677 was his second taste of the tender mercies of the law. Muggletonianism, however, notwithstanding a recent slight revival in London, so far as numbers are concerned, hardly counts for anything in the religious history of the country, and for a study of religious development does not count at all. With the Nonconformist spirit, of course, it has no affinity or relation whatever. One glance at Muggletonianism and its founder may suffice. In connection with a very different man another distinguishing glance may be made; and it calls for record that Fox was freed from his last imprisonment—which had, with certain breaks, lasted for fourteen months—in 1675.[2] But otherwise the record of persecution may remain set in general terms. There is not much to be put on the other side. Here and there appears a clergyman of the Establishment—like Bishop Croft of Hereford[3]—who showed himself willing to pursue the "Comprehension" idea. One or two actual attempts in that direction were made, as when the Earl of Orrery approached Baxter in 1673,[4] and when Tillotson and Stillingfleet informed Baxter in 1675 that they wished for a meeting with him in order to see whether an accommodation could not be found.[5] At least one effort was put forth to secure the support of the Nonconformists for a political course by promising them support in their strife after religious liberty, when Shaftesbury—who was, however, religious liberty's genuine friend—made more or less formal overtures to them to assist him in working for the dissolution of the existing Parliament, which had now been sitting for fifteen

[1] *History of England* (ed. 1858), i. 165. The article on Muggleton by Alexander Gordon in the *Dictionary of National Biography* contains as much about the man as most people will care to know. But those desiring further information can consult two articles by the same author on "The Origin of the Muggletonians" and on "Ancient and Modern Muggletonians" in the *Transactions of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society* for 1869 and 1870 respectively.

[2] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), ii. 230.

[3] Croft issued *The Naked Truth* in 1675, but some later books professing to be "part two," etc., were not from his pen.

[4] *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, part iii. pp. 109 ff.

[5] *Ibid.* part iii. pp. 156 ff.

years.[1] And during this period Charles, to his credit be it said, was so far under the impulse of generosity towards those whom he had first of all encouraged and then left to their fate as to give annual grants of fifty or a hundred pounds to some of the Presbyterian ministers,[2] making also, somewhere about 1674, a special gift of a thousand guineas to John Owen for distribution among his impoverished Independent brethren.[3] Owen, this may be a convenient place to say, had commenced a ministry in Leadenhall Street in 1673, where he had some persons of note among his hearers, and in 1677 made a second marriage which enabled him to live in something like affluence at Kensington and afterwards at Ealing.[4] There were always some in high quarters who favoured him, and he thus stood in better position than most, and could do some little service for his oppressed friends. But all this was after all little more than the offering of sweets to a person in mortal straits, and effected no difference in the position of Nonconformity as a whole. It was not until the pretended disclosures of Titus Oates in the autumn of 1678 had quickened the general fear of Romanism to positive frenzy that the temporary abatement in the fury of persecution, previously alluded to, set in.

The details of the alleged "Popish Plot" are well-known matters of history, and need not be entered upon here.[5] Oates was of course a worthless and perjured scoundrel—a man who, in the penetrating phrase of Sir Roger L'Estrange,

[1] *Debate or Arguments for dissolving the Present Parliament*, in Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*, iv. Appendix vii.

[2] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), i. 555; Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 468, 469.

[3] Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 469; Orme, *Memoirs of Owen*, p. 378; Burnet (as previous note) says absurdly that in this way the Court "hired them to be silent."

[4] Orme, *Memoirs of Owen*, pp. 362-377, 392; Stoughton (*History of Religion in England*, ed. 1881, iii. 312) ante-dates Owen's second marriage by ten years.

[5] For Oates and the Plot, see Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 172, etc.; Seccombe, *Lives of Twelve Bad Men*, pp. 95-154. Oates was at two periods of his life connected with the Baptists, but they expelled him in the end. Somewhat curiously, Crosby, though justly branding Oates as infamous (*History of the English Baptists*, iii. 166 ff.) nevertheless speaks of the "never to be forgotten service to his country" which Oates rendered, "at once saving the life of his sovereign, the government of the nation, and the protestant religion, from a total extirpation, and all good protestants from a massacre." (*Ibid.* ii. 277.)

"drank the tears of widows and orphans"[1]—a man who was prepared to swear anything to the prejudice of anybody if only it were made worth his while. And the temper of the nation at this time made the invention of the "Plot" well worth while. There was no difficulty in obtaining the credence of the multitudes, and of the authorities as well, to tales of twenty thousand Catholics who were to rise in London, and to other tales of how the King was to be poisoned, shot, or stabbed. Parliament, urged on by the thousand spurs of popular panic, set itself to devise not only means of protection for the immediate day, but securities for the coming morrow. This last was the more important thing, for the only means whereby security for the future could be taken was by the exclusion of James, the King's avowed Catholic brother, from the succession to the throne; and attempts in this direction make the pivot of politics for the next two or three years. Very naturally, Charles himself, in his brother's interests, made strong resistance to them all. A Bill to shut out Romanists from Parliament and from the Councils was the first shot in the war; but although the Bill passed late in the year, the Lords excepted James from its operation, and the desired end was therefore as far off as ever.[2] After a dissolution in January 1679, a new Parliament, meeting in March, attacked the question again. The Commons, remembering how the intentions of their predecessors had been frustrated, took now a stronger and more direct line; and, spurning suggestions which Charles made in the way of compromise, passed a Bill expressly declaring that the Crown should at the King's death devolve upon the next legitimately succeeding Protestant head.[3] They paid for their daring by being first prorogued and then dissolved, a fresh Parliament being called for October of the same year.[4] This fresh Parliament, however, chanced to be elected just at the time when the tide of popular fear as to Catholicism was at full flood; so that, although almost immediately after its election the ebb set in, the new Commons were as eagerly bent upon exclusion as

[1] Quoted by Seccombe, article on Oates in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. [2] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 184.
[3] *Ibid.* ix. 206, 207. [4] *Ibid.* ix. 210, 220, 221.

the old. But though they met in October 1679, it was, owing to repeated prorogations, twelve months later before they got seriously to work.[1] Having got to work, they worked quickly, and once again the Exclusion Bill went through.[2] In the Lords, however, it failed.[3] The nation as a whole was recovering from its orgie of panic, and was beginning to feel a flush of shame for the readiness with which it had swallowed the inventions of Oates and his allies: while the Bill was being debated the petitions sent up in its favour were mixed with and countered by equally numerous and equally vehement addresses calling for its rejection;[4] so that Charles, in opposing the Commons' desires and influencing the Lords to oppose them too, might reasonably plead that the temper of the Commons and the temper of the people were no longer one. The dissolution of the Parliament in January 1681 afforded a practical demonstration of how confident in this sense the King had grown.[5] True, the popular reaction had not yet gone far enough to change the character of the next Parliament, which the King summoned to meet at Oxford in March; and a new compromise suggested from the King's side—a compromise whereby James, on his accession, should have no more than the sovereign title, the actual government falling into a Protestant Regent's hands—was rejected after a two days' debate, room being thus made for the old Exclusion Bill to be brought forward once more.[6] But so sure of his ground was Charles (he had, moreover, made a new secret but unwritten treaty with the King of France which, in exchange for his promise of neutrality, gave him an assurance of French gold[7]) that this Parliament met its doom in April[8]—three very short-lived Parliaments having thus followed upon the very long-lived one which had sat from 1661 to 1679, and the last of these

[1] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), ix. 223.

[2] *Ibid.* ix. 237. [3] *Ibid.* ix. 238.

[4] The two sections were termed "Petitioners" and "Abhorrers." See Green, *History of the English People*, iii. 435. Green's entire treatment of this period, politically so complicated, is remarkably clear and vivid for a condensed summary. [5] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 5.

[6] *Ibid.* (ed. 1855), x. 5-11. For the suggested compromise, see also Reresby, *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), p. 209, and Clarke's *Life of James II.*, i. 670, 671.

[7] Lingard, *History of England*, x. 6. [8] *Ibid.* x. 11.

three proving besides to be the last of Charles's reign. Charles had calculated his chances well, and felt that the nation's changing mood would enable him to pursue that prize of autocracy which was now the one prize he cared to win. Events soon proved that he was right, and that the Catholic terror was dying down.

But just as that terror had, while it was mounting, told for Nonconformity's disadvantage, so, during its maintenance at the highest point of the scale, it had told somewhat for Nonconformity's good. As we move from the time of Oates's appearance upon the scene to the time when men's implicit faith in him gave place to interrogative shaking of the head, we note along this brief stretch of road that the anti-Nonconformist persecution is a little on the wane. It is merely a matter of degree ; and all that can be said is that hostility in some quarters had its fires a little damped down. It was, in fact, natural enough that the clearer heads should see how absurd it was to link Romanism and Nonconformity together as the dangerous foes of the land, when Nonconformity was obviously by its very nature as firm-set against Romanism as any Church of England man could be, and was, besides, proclaiming its anti-Romanism in a thousand ways.[1] The new mitigation of hatred was to prove only transient ; but while it lasted, it did not fail to make some open signs. One wonders that the idea of Comprehension had not been torn to useless rags for every sensible man by this time ; but the idea was mooted once again (in 1680) at conferences between John Howe on the one side and Tillotson and Stillingfleet on the other ;[2] while a Bill looking in

[1] It is hardly necessary to notice Lathbury's absurd statement — unless indeed one notices it to laugh at it—to the effect that "if we look back over the latter part of the reign of Charles the Second we shall find that the Dissenters were silent on the subject of Popery" (*History of the Non-Jurors*, pp. 11 ff.). Of course it was unnecessary for Dissenters, whose very existence was a repudiation of nearly every Romanist doctrine, to prove *themselves* non-Romanist. But Lathbury's general statement is overthrown by the mere mention of John Owen's name.

[2] Rogers's *Life of Howe* (ed. 1879), pp. 143-145. This is a convenient place to say that Howe, though usually considered an Independent, was at any rate theoretically a Presbyterian. Hence his willingness to discuss a Comprehension scheme. But he was a most large-minded man, and would never have consented to any scheme which left Independents and others with their hardships unredressed.

that same Comprehension direction was talked over in Parliament in November.[1] Enough breath, so to say, was pumped into the Bill to keep it standing through a brief debate: then it collapsed as other similar Bills had collapsed; and how closely this tentative leniency to Nonconformity was intertwined with the Romanist fear is seen in Kennett's confession that the clergy who supported the measure were "no further in earnest than as they apprehended the knife of the Papists at their throats."[2] Another Bill which would have brought some measure of relief to Protestant Dissenters actually passed both the Commons and the Lords, but stumbled over its final step. This was one of the occasions on which, under a petulant impulse, the King came back upon religious matters again; and through some trickery which must have had Charles himself behind it, the Bill was never brought up for the royal assent.[3] Its passage through the Houses stands, nevertheless, as a token of relaxed severity towards the Nonconformist sects. Perhaps a still more striking indication of that same relaxed severity—at any rate, a sign that it was widely spread—is to be found in such documents as the one which the Corporation of Bristol drew up, asserting that "differences among ourselves" did but give the Jesuits "a fairer prospect of bringing us under the tyranny of Rome," and lamenting that members of the Church of England "who had any moderation towards Dissenting Protestants should be considered ill-disposed to that Church or to the throne."[4] It is worth noting, also, that at least one politician—the Duke of Buckingham—at this time thought the Nonconformists worth cultivating, and invited Howe to visit him with a view to seeing if some arrangement for winning their support could be made.[5] As has been stated, this change of temper amounted to no more than a temporary and fitful rift in clouds which were to

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), ii. 279; Reresby's *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), p. 194; Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iv. 460.

[2] Quoted by Neal, as previous note.

[3] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), ii. 279. The Commons, foiled in the matter of the Bill, passed a resolution to the effect that persecution of Nonconformists was dangerous to the order of the realm (*Journals of the House of Commons*, ix. 704).

[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iv. 22.

[5] Rogers's *Life of Howe* (ed. 1879), pp. 135, 136.

lower again as darkly as they had lowered before; but it calls for notice by the student of the history as indicating how Nonconformist fortunes depended upon far other things than the merits of Nonconformity itself, and as marking the one brief spell of comparative rest enjoyed by Nonconformity between the withdrawal of the Declaration of Indulgence and the Toleration Act which followed that withdrawal at an interval of sixteen years.

With the passing of the Catholic scare, and the revival of attachment to the person of the King, Nonconformity's spell of comparative rest was over. The fact that the alleged Catholic "plot," as Oates and his associates engineered it, was directed against Charles, had naturally done something to bring about that revival by largely relieving Charles from the suspicion of Catholic tendency under which he had formerly lain; and now that the Catholic fear was practically dead, the changed mood of the nation saw Charles wholly cleared, the revival thus being speeded up still more. According to Burnet, men had even before this begun to make constant reference, in their common talk, to the events of the rebellion and the Civil War, and to discuss the probability of history's repetition in that regard.[1] Now the only thought in connection with Nonconformists was this —they were actual or possible traitors to the throne. The very fact that they had shared in the general suspicion of the royal designs, and had in all the recent parliamentary elections thrown their weight upon the anti-Catholic side, became a count in the indictment against them now.[2] The last years of Charles's reign saw the winds of angry passion sweeping fiercely upon all kinds of Dissent—so fiercely that the violence of every preceding gale was utterly outdone. There was no one to stand between them and the foe; for no Parliament met, so that voices which had of late spoken on toleration's behalf within the parliamentary walls were heard no more; and the King, caring for nothing but his own despotic power, let things go. One abortive attempt, indeed, he did make (in 1684) to secure some relaxation of the penal laws against Romanists and Nonconformists, being

[1] *History of My Own Time* (ed. Airy), ii. 221.
[2] On this, see Howe in *The Case of Protestant Dissenters*, pp. 2, 3.

urged thereto by his brother James; but under the opposition of the Bishops the scheme, into the pushing of which the King had, indeed, never put any real heart, was speedily quashed.[1] Charles was far too deeply engrossed in the establishment and use of his autocratic strength, and in doing what he could to secure for his successor a position like his own, to trouble much about religious affairs; and for that matter the majority in the country loved to have it so, as Welwood indicates when he tells us that "the rest of that reign was one continued invasion upon the rights of the people, and the nation seemed unwilling now to contend for them any more."[2] Under circumstances like these, the Nonconformists had simply to bear their fate as best they might. It was hard indeed. The Council exhorted magistrates, who in most cases needed no exhortation, to put the laws against conventicles into fullest operation;[3] while on the other hand addresses were sent up from individuals, from municipalities, and from magistrates' benches, complaining that severity did not go far enough, and giving solemn warnings of the hatching of Nonconformist plots.[4] The old engines of informers, fines, distress warrants, and arrests, were set working at high pressure once again:[5] things were thrown back into the old condition which had prevailed after the second Conventicle Act was passed;[6] and it must have been hard for either persecutors or persecuted to believe that the name of such a thing as an Indulgence had ever been heard in the land. Men and women stole into their meeting-houses muffled in various disguises, and sang their hymns in a voice as much like a whisper as they could make it.[7] More than one sufferer—Thomas Delaune, a Baptist school-teacher, and Francis Bampfield, a Baptist minister, may be named[8]

[1] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 49, 50.

[2] *Memoirs of the Most Material Transactions, etc.* (ed. 1820), p. 122.

[3] Neal, *History of the Puritans*, iv. 471, 472.

[4] Neal, as previous note. See also Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iv. 48, 50.

[5] For many instances consult Stoughton, as previous note, iv. 50-56, 67-72, also the denominational *Histories* as before.

[6] *Supra*, pp. 72-74.

[7] Quoted by Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iv. 53, from an old Church book.

[8] Ivimey, *History of English Baptists*, i. 395 ff., 405 ff.; Crosby, *History of English Baptists*, ii. 361, 375; Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs*, i. 302.

—died in prison. Persecution of Quakers went so far as the putting of children into the stocks and the cruel scourging of boys.[1] And these things were not exceptional either as to time or as to place, but the happenings of every day and the common sights of almost every district and town. Well might one letter-writer say that "it is a sorrowful time with Dissenters,"[2] and another pray, "The Lord give grace suitable to our daily circumstances, and fit his people for mercy; then should I hope the time would not be long."[3] If here and there a voice rose from the ranks of the ecclesiastical party in power, it was lost amid the general clamour—and yet all the more for that reason, and for the unpopularity which the speakers risked, should it be remembered that such voices there were. "The things we contend about are of such a nature that they cannot bear so much weight as some would lay upon them," declared Samuel Bold, the Vicar of Shapwicke in Dorsetshire. "They are generally the worst men," he courageously went on, "who are most for violence in relation to those who differ about some little indifferences." "You may turn the places of our worship into prisons, if you please," he says again, "but you cannot by these means make the Dissenters a willing people in the day of your power. The members of the Church," he went on in words which are memorable as coming from such a source, "must be volunteers, not pressed men." And against spies, and informers, and persecutors, he launches the thrusts that they are the "pest of society," and "dangerous to live amongst as the wild and savage beasts of the desert."[4] A man who could speak thus daringly in those years of untamed passion deserves mention, made with ungrudging honour, upon a Nonconformist page. But he, and the few who thought as he thought, could accomplish nothing. Nonconformists could but summon up their reserves of faithfulness, knowing that faithfulness might have to be even unto death, plant their feet firmly on the earth and lift their hearts steadfastly towards heaven, and so suffer and wait. And

[1] Besse, *Sufferings of the Quakers*, i. 66.
[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, ii. 616. [3] *Ibid.* ii. 617.
[4] See Bold's sermon, *A Plea for Moderation towards Dissenters*, also other discourses of his; Waddington, as cited, ii. 613-615.

thus darkly and heavily the last years of Charles's reign drove on.

The accession of James in 1685 could not be expected by the Nonconformists to bring (and did not bring) any relief. Having regard to what the new sovereign was known to be, it might rather be expected to lay upon them (as it did) a still heavier cross. It was with dark prospects that the Nonconformists entered upon the new reign. Their long period of trial must have done much to wear down their strength, and this just when fulness of strength was needed most. In fancy one can hear them, as they looked from the years behind to the years before, crying "How long, O Lord, how long?" It was no small matter, either, that many of the great Nonconformist protagonists whose presence, exhortation, and example had heartened the rank and file hitherto had passed from the scene: as far back as 1674 Hooke had mournfully written, in respect of the Congregationalists, "God hath of late years taken away many of our able ministers";[1] and since then the list of those who had "taken their wages" had grown, Thomas Goodwin in 1680 and John Owen in 1683, among the rest, having fared home.[2] Against Nonconformity the tendency of all things in the national temper and in the practice of the authorities seemed fixed, nor was there anywhere any sign offered to Nonconformist eyes at the beholding of which Nonconformist hearts might feel the stir of hope. And the earliest events of James's reign could not but deepen the impression of gloom, the apprehension of intenser gloom to be. The reign was but three weeks old when Baxter was tried for a so-called seditious publication before the infamous Jeffreys, called "blockhead," "villain," and many other opprobrious names by his brutal judge, and sentenced to imprisonment till he should pay a fine of five hundred pounds—which meant that Baxter, since he could not raise such a sum, remained eighteen months in jail.[3] Then followed the old hue and cry—the old trumped-up charges of treason—the old

[1] Waddington, *Congregational History*, ii. 610.

[2] Calamy, *Nonconformists' Memorial* (ed. Palmer), i. 240; Orme's *Memoirs of Owen*, pp. 446-449.

[3] Orme's *Life of Baxter* (Baxter's *Works*, ed. Orme, i. 362-375); Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs*, i. 345, 350.

attempts to hide—the old tortures mental, moral, and physical—all the old processes and catastrophes (with an occasional wonderful deliverance here and there) the repetition of which proved that cruelty and bigotry on the one side, and heroism on the other, were what they had ever been.[1] So far were things carried that the number of sufferers for conscience' sake in James's time is estimated by one writer to have brought up the total for this reign and the preceding one to sixty thousand, five thousand of whom prison hardships had done to death;[2] and though it is not contended that the figure is necessarily correct, the very suggestion of it (since even an exaggeration, to have any chance at all of acceptance by reasonable men, must not go too far beyond the truth) indicates how large the actual number must have been. At any rate, it is certain that in the early years of James's reign persecution excelled itself. And yet, although among the Nonconformists themselves none could have supposed that anything was left to do save to endure to the end, and although no outside observer would have cared to lay the smallest stake upon Nonconformity's chance of obtaining relief—it was close upon this rush of direst trouble that Nonconformity's deliverance was to come. With scarce any intervening time of morning twilight, midnight was to pass into day.

The sequence of events was as follows. Not only was the new King, as everybody knew, an avowed Catholic, but —as was not known—he was bent upon leading the country back to the Catholic fold. The suspicion which had been mistakenly entertained in respect of Charles might have been entertained with entire justice in respect of James. He did indeed declare, in a speech delivered to the Council at the opening of his reign, that he would preserve the government as "now by law established, both in Church

[1] As in regard to previous outbursts of persecution, so here it is unnecessary to enter into details which would only make a repetition of details already familiar. Those who wish to see particulars may once again be referred to the various denominational *Histories*.

[2] So Jeremy White, as stated by Oldmixon, *History of England under the Royal House of Stuart*, p. 715. Oldmixon adds a remarkable story to the effect that James II. pressed White for his list of the persecuted in order to "expose the Church," but that White declined to furnish it.

and State";[1] but at a later period he endeavoured to cover his practice, so contradictory to that profession as it turned out to be, by saying that he had only meant to support the "professors" of the established religion, and not "the religion itself."[2] Contemptible as the sophistry is, it serves at any rate to put the King's original intentions beyond doubt.[3] For that matter, the line of action upon which he entered immediately after his accession was itself sufficient to make his purpose plain. He was determined to restore Catholicism; and, moreover, he was determined to do this by the mere strength of his right hand and his stretched-out arm. There was to be no concealment, no subtle scheming—only the assertion of a right to do as he liked. He attended Mass on Easter Sunday in the Queen's chapel, "where he caused the doors to be left open," announcing besides that he proposed to do so whenever he would and that he expected the officers of his household to bear him company to the door when he went.[4] He ordered the clergy to stop all denunciations of Romanism in the pulpits they occupied.[5] He put Catholic Peers upon the Privy Council, Catholic officers into the army, Catholic Governors into the fortresses[6]—all this, of course, in flagrant violation of the Test Act, by which James intimated he did not intend to be bound.[7] In order to obtain a declaration of the validity of the dispensing power claimed, a "put-up" case was brought before the King's Bench, and a judgment won from a company of judges which had been purged and packed in such wise as to make sure that it would not pronounce in any other sense than that which the King desired.[8] A still greater

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iii. 6; Clarke, *Life of James II.*, ii. 3.

[2] Clarke, as previous note, ii. 4.

[3] It disposes, for instance, of Lingard's contention (*History of England*, ed. 1855, x. 63) that "he limited his views to the accomplishment of two objects, which he called liberty of conscience and freedom of worship."

[4] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 62; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), i. 472; Clarke, *Life of James II.*, ii. 5, 6.

[5] Macaulay, as cited, ii. 90 ff.; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iii. 100 ff.

[6] For a summary of these things, see Lingard, as former note (ed. 1855), x. 106-110.

[7] Burnet, as former note, iii. 66; *Journals of the House of Commons*, ix. 756.

[8] Lingard, as former note, x. 103, Macaulay, as former note, ii. 83, 84; Evelyn's *Diary and Correspondence* (ed. Bray), ii. 255; Mackintosh's *History of the Revolution*, pp. 56-63.

daring was shown when James permitted a clergyman who had turned Romanist to remain as Master of University College at Oxford, and made John Massey, a Roman Catholic priest, Dean of Christ Church.[1] The Court of High Commission, of whose reconstruction no whisper had been heard even amid the perfervid loyalty of Restoration days, was once again set up[2]—and for what ends it would use those "unlimited powers in ecclesiastical cases" which, according to Burnet, it was to possess, when it owed its existence to such a sovereign as James was showing himself to be, could be matter of doubt to none. All this made James's project, and the high-handed manner in which he meant to carry it through, sufficiently plain. But signs of resistance appeared. No longer than nine months after James came to the throne, Parliament—whose very summoning, in view of the years which had passed without one, had helped to quicken assurance of the new King's desire to stand well with his people—had turned from confidence to doubt, had in November declared the Test Act to be inviolable, and had asked for the dismissal of the newly-appointed Catholic officers from the posts in which they had illegally been placed.[3] A reproof administered by the King was by no means meekly received; and in face of what he would of course have termed continued contumacy, James fell back upon the customary Stuart plan and prorogued the assembly which had dared to thwart him.[4] But although in this way the immediate obstacle was overcome (the Parliament was never called together again except for repeated prorogations, and was finally dissolved late in 1687) James had seemingly been made to think. To say that he had been seriously alarmed would be too much: there is no sign that right up to the descent of the catastrophe which ended his reign he realised the dangers of the situation or the forces he was slipping from their leash. It was still by autocracy that he proposed to achieve his heart's desire. But "divide and conquer" was a motto which might have some application

[1] Macaulay, as previous note, ii. 85, 87.

[2] *Ibid.* ii. 92-96; D'Oyly, *Life of Sancroft*, i. 221.

[3] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 95, 96; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 26; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, iv. 1378, 1379.

[4] Lingard, as previous note, x. 96; Macaulay, as previous note, ii. 28, 35.

to the case; and it might be well to buttress his autocracy with the support of some allies, if he could. And the Nonconformists presented themselves to his mind as allies whom it might prove worth his while to court.

It was certainly not by love of them that James was moved. He had indeed released a large number of Quakers at the beginning of his reign;[1] but upon Quakers he had looked as Charles had looked upon them, as merely silly folk who merited contempt rather than hate—though he was doubtless also inclined to leniency toward them by his liking for William Penn, the son of the Admiral Penn who had been a close friend of the King in earlier days. For Nonconformists in the mass he had given no sign whatever of favourable regard. Macaulay expressly declares that after minute research he cannot find evidence of any single person, other than a Roman Catholic or a Quaker, having had grace shown to him under the orders whereby the Quakers were set free.[2] Probably the King's true feeling for Nonconformity was manifested in the merriment which he displayed, and in which he called upon the surrounding courtiers to join, while some Baptists who presented a petition to him were kept kneeling at his feet.[3] But now toleration seemed to be the proper move for the winning of his game. On April 4, 1687, the King repeated his brother's great stroke of 1672, and put forth a Declaration of Indulgence whereby the Test Act, the Act for excluding Romanists from Parliament, and all laws under which Nonconformity of any kind was penalised, were swept away by the fiat of the royal will.[4] James's Declaration was indeed a more daring thing than that of Charles had been; for the offered freedom was unconditional, depending upon no "licences" or anything of the kind; and it cancelled all past convictions under the penal religious laws besides rendering convictions impossible in the future. For a brief time some of the Nonconformists were attracted by the dangling bait. Warnings against the

[1] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 387 ff.
[2] *History of England* (ed. 1858), i. 509 note.
[3] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), iv. 101.
[4] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 614, 615; Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 122; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 210; Clarke, *Life of James II.*, ii. 102.

snare were not lacking, even from some outside the Nonconformist ranks; and indeed lookers-on were probably better able than the Nonconformists themselves to see the true inwardness of James's move.[1] But it is little wonder that the brightly-gilded pill was taken by very many for wholesome sweets. Although in a few months practically the whole of Nonconformity had realised the danger, and on the second promulgation of the Indulgence made common cause with the Established Church in measures of resistance and defence, it is hardly correct to represent the first promulgation as having been unwelcomed by the general body of Dissent. The most representative Nonconformists, such as Baxter and Howe,[2] did indeed steadfastly refuse to join in any open expression of thanks to the King, notwithstanding all the pressure brought to bear upon them by agents of the Court.[3] Bunyan, now within sixteen months of his life's close, declined as sturdily as any one[4] to be bribed into anything like alliance with the Government, though after all the hardships through which his Bedford ministry had been maintained the sudden dropping of his burden might well have moved him to transports of thankful relief. But practically all were ready to avail themselves of the gift James offered—for which censorious critics of to-day, looking back upon that olden time from their firesides and arm-chairs, and unable to realise how the iron had entered into the Nonconformists' soul, may blame them if they will. And in some of the addresses of gratitude presented to the throne from Nonconformists generally, various high-flown phrases of adulation recalled the extravagances perpetrated on the corresponding occasion in the reign of Charles the Second.[5] It is worth noting, too, that now, as on the issue of Charles's Indulgence, Nonconformists who had concealed their Nonconformity poured back from the Churches to the Meeting-houses, and that once more the cry of parish Churches "left exceeding thin" rose

[1] See specially the *Letter to a Dissenter*, supposed by some at the time to have been written by Sir William Temple, but really the work of Halifax (Macaulay, *History of England*, ed. 1858, ii. 218).

[2] Rogers's *Life of Howe* (ed. 1879), pp. 182, 183.

[3] For this pressure, see Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 214-223.

[4] Brown's *Life of Bunyan* (ed. 1887), pp. 366, 367.

[5] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iii. 174, 175. Some of the addresses are quoted from in Stoughton's *History of Religion in England* (ed.

plaintively and pitifully through the air.[1] But soon the sound of the march of events grew so loud, and consequently gave such clear indication of the goal to which the march was trending, that even the most deeply mesmerised Nonconformist awoke. Pushing, as he thought, to his aim—really rushing to his doom—James added folly to folly. The attack upon the Universities it was that went far to bring matters to a head. Cambridge was commanded to admit a Romanist to the degree of Master of Arts, the candidate being of course unable, on account of his Romanism, to take the necessary oaths;[2] but this affair, though it led to the deprivation of Vice-Chancellor Peachell, was small compared with what took place at the sister seat. There the Presidency of Magdalen College fell vacant on the death of Dr. Clarke: the King nominated Anthony Farmer, who was supposed to be on the point of conforming to the Church of Rome: the Fellows, in defiance of the Royal mandate, elected Dr. Hough: the High Commission declared the election null and void, and though the nomination of Farmer was not persisted in, Parker, Bishop of Oxford, another man suspected of Catholic leanings, was appointed to the disputed post; and finally, after infinite wrangling and brow-beating, the protesting Fellows were expelled in order that James should have his way.[3] It may be mentioned, to close the account, that a little later Parker died, and Giffard, a Catholic Vicar-Apostolic, was put into his place.[4] Such things as these portended a stern conflict to come. But James, heedless of, or unable to measure, the strength of the opposition he was rousing, drove daring yet higher. In April of 1688 the Declaration of Indulgence was promulgated once again, accompanied this time by an order that it should be read on May 20th and 27th in all the pulpits of the Established

1881), v. 120, 121. But these addresses were few in number. See Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 223.

[1] *Supra*, p. 79. See Evelyn's *Diary and Correspondence* (ed. Bray), ii. 265, as to Deptford in 1687.

[2] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 124; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 279.

[3] Lingard, as previous note, x. 125-127; Macaulay, as previous note, ii. 285 ff. The documents connected with the case are in Bloxam's *Magdalen College and James II.*

[4] Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 146.

Church.[1] Upon the Bishops was laid the charge of seeing that the reading was duly performed. The story of how, while some complied, the others refused, and of how the heroic "seven" went yet further and openly presented their objections to the frowning monarch, choosing rather to suffer imprisonment than give way to a royal command which was in reality a royal impertinence and an attempt to involve the Bishops and clergy in the perjury of the King's own soul, is too well known to need more than bare mention here. The actual charge upon which James put the "seven" to trial was one of misdemeanour in signing and presenting a petition explanatory of their refusal to comply with the royal command;[2] but popular instinct had penetrated to the heart of the whole business, and, though the judges were equally divided as to the libellous or non-libellous character of the Bishops' petition, the verdict of the jury set the prisoners free. How deeply the nation had been stirred was proved by the gratification with which the verdict was received, by the lowly kneeling of the populace for blessing as the Bishops quitted the Court, by crowded thanksgiving services and, most remarkable of all, by the exultant shouting on Hounslow Heath of the soldiers who, according to James's notions, were to have been in the last resort the subservient and effectual agents of his will.[3] Recent events had, in fact, united all classes of the community in common resistance to a danger which, it was felt, levelled its threat equally against every one. What is specially to our purpose is the effect they had wrought in the stilling of animosities—a stilling which, if only temporary, was real enough while it lasted—between Nonconformists and the Church. On the Nonconformist side, James's second Declaration had not even met with the lukewarm welcome which, from some of the Nonconformist rank and file, the

[1] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 616; D'Oyly, *Life of Sancroft*, i. 251; Lingard, *History of England* (ed. 1855), x. 147; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 346; Clarke, *Life of James II.*, ii. 152; Mackintosh, *History of the Revolution*, p. 241.

[2] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 617; Lingard, as previous note, x. 152-154; Macaulay, as previous note, ii. 351 ff. The "seven" were Sancroft of Canterbury, White of Peterborough, Turner of Ely, Lloyd of St. Asaph, Lake of Chichester, Ken of Bath and Wells, and Trelawny of Exeter.

[3] Lingard and Macaulay, as before.

first had received: the Bishops and clergy, during the fateful conference at which their line of conduct in reference to the Declaration had been discussed, had received a letter from certain Nonconformists urging them to stand fast;[1] and ten Nonconformist ministers had, to the King's utmost disgust and wrath, visited the imprisoned "seven" in the Tower to congratulate them and to wish them well.[2] This time it was quite in vain that the net was spread in sight of the bird. On the side of the Church, the change of mood towards the Nonconformists which had set in with the publication of James's first Declaration became yet more marked. Even in 1687 it had been marked enough. Even then "those who had lately been designated as schismatics and fanatics were now dear fellow Protestants, weak brethren it might be, but still brethren, whose scruples were entitled to tender regard."[3] Now the tone grew still more dulcet. Archbishop Sancroft (Sancroft had succeeded Sheldon on the latter's death in 1677)[4] changed his so markedly as to counsel his clergy (July 1688) to treat their Nonconformist brethren with courteous kindness, although it was added that the ultimate object was to be the bringing back of the wanderers to the fold.[5] Even Comprehension made another of its periodical appearances on the stage, though this time it was barely more than a shadowy flitting across.[6] It must not be supposed that behind all this there was any real change of fundamental temper on the part of the chief dignitaries of the Establishment. There was more in it, certainly, than a merely selfish desire on the part of the Church to save herself. There was in it, certainly, an earnest desire to save the Protestant faith. But there was no more in it than a willingness to use any and every weapon to that end, even weapons which had been despised before. For the moment, nothing could be considered as too lowly for enlistment in the cause. A sudden change from the spirit of exclusiveness to the spirit of toleration would have been as miraculous as a change of a

[1] Mackintosh, *History of the Revolution*, p. 246.
[2] Reresby's *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), p. 396.
[3] Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), ii. 217.
[4] D'Oyly's *Life of Sancroft*, i. 151.
[5] Sancroft's "Articles" are in Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 618, 619.
[6] D'Oyly, *Life of Sancroft*, i. 326.

leopard's spots; and evidence of such a change there is none. Yet it was out of this temporary eclipse of intolerance that the permanent shining of toleration's sun was to break. For it was impossible, if only for very shame's sake, that the allies with whom in her hour of danger the Church had been content to link herself should be made slaves again when the crisis was past: the largeness of vision and the fulness of self-abnegation which Nonconformists had shown in refusing to profit by the Declaration of Indulgence or to sacrifice the interests of Protestantism and of the nation for the sake of a transient easing of their own hard lot, could not but be taken into the reckoning when matters settled down again; and when, after the crisis which carried James off his throne had been breathlessly lived through, Church and Parliament and country came to take stock of the situation, they found themselves owing to Nonconformity a debt which must be honoured and for which toleration was the *minimum* that could be offered in discharge.

This bare *minimum* (we pass over the facts of the Revolution itself as not being our concern, and pick up the story when the Revolution has become an accomplished fact) was, in fact, all the repayment that was accorded. The majority of the Nonconformists, immediately upon William's accession, were hoping for more; and an attempt to give them more was made. The most serious effort in the long series of efforts at Comprehension took place early in 1689, a Bill to effect it being brought into the House of Lords on March 11th.[1] As it came to nothing in the end, all that needs to be said about it here is that it followed in the main the lines which earlier suggestions had taken, though in some of its provisions a more pronounced liberalism might be discerned. Having passed the Lords, it was shelved by the Commons, who let the Bill lie on the table, and instead of addressing themselves directly

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iv. 15-21; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), iii. 89 ff. The Bill itself was not printed in full till 1865, when it appeared as an Appendix to *A Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to consider the subscriptions, declarations, and oaths required to be made and taken by the clergy of the United Church of England and Ireland*, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1865, xv. 47-50 (British Museum).

to the question, joined with the Upper House in an address to the King praying that Convocation should be summoned to discuss and set in order ecclesiastical affairs.[1] When Convocation met—though in the meantime a Royal Commission had been drawing up plans for the alteration of the Prayer Book in such a sense as to conciliate Nonconformist feeling[2]—hostility to the scheme won the day, and Comprehension had once again to slink scorned to the rear.[3] There had really been little heart in pushing it, except on the part of a few. Even some who would on many grounds have favoured it thought that the general principle of toleration would have a better chance of permanent favour if a large body were left to contend for it outside the Established Church;[4] and while some of the Church leaders—such as Tillotson—supported the Comprehension plan, others fulminated against it in indignant and even in intemperate tones.[5] Near as the vessel came to harbour, it was wrecked before anchor could be safely cast. On the part of the Nonconformists, disappointment was deep. Nor, in the case of the Presbyterians, is this in any degree surprising. The dream which they had dreamed for so many years—the dream of a national Church whose gates should be wide enough to let them come in and take their places at their episcopal brethren's side—had, after their long and wistful waiting, seemed so near to realisation at last: the hope which had been thought extinguished had flamed upward again; and now it was the old story, and all was lost! They have left on record for us, in words which read as if they had been written to the accompaniment of tears, how deeply they were moved.[6] Baxter even went so far as to disavow the name of Presbyterian in his eagerness to protest that he would accept episcopal rule, and declared that in making the startling

[1] Burnet, as previous note, iv. 20; Reresby's *Memoirs* (ed. Cartwright), p. 455.

[2] A good account of the Commission's proceedings may be seen in Stoughton's *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 98-106.

[3] Lathbury, *History of Convocation* (2nd ed.), pp. 325 ff.

[4] So Burnet says (*History of My Own Time*, ed. 1823, iv. 20, 21).

[5] South protested angrily against the admission of "the rabble."

[6] See Calamy, *My Own Life*, i. 207; Calamy, *Life of Howe*, p. 163.

statement he spoke not for himself alone.[1] But Presbyterian disappointment is not difficult to understand. That Independents should have been willing to consider entrance into the scheme, and should have bemoaned the closing of the doors, is another matter. Of the fact there is no doubt at all, even though it is qualified by the other fact that a not inconsiderable Independent minority looked askance upon the whole thing. In a deputation of ministers which waited on William and Mary soon after their settlement on the throne, Independent delegates had a place; and, though the spokesman was the Presbyterian Bates, the Independents must be considered to have identified themselves with him when he said that the terms of union as prescribed by "the ruling wisdom of our Saviour" would be cheerfully embraced.[2] And when Calamy declares his belief that if the Comprehension Bill had gone through, two-thirds of the Nonconformists would have come back within the Establishment's pale,[3] the remark shows that the Independents, or at any rate considerable numbers of them, would have been content to play the part of returning prodigal if the Church had been willing to hold out open arms. The significance of the fact we shall presently note. For the moment we note simply the fact itself. To Independents, as to Presbyterians, the failure of Comprehension presented itself as a disaster, because it marked the final crumbling of an ideal which had won their praise.

At any rate, Comprehension failed. Toleration was all that could be achieved. William himself was prepared, or rather anxious, for more; and his readiness to admit practically everybody to the public service without distinction of creed[4]—which would have meant the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts—is to his lasting honour, and shows how far he was in advance of his time. But this could not be. This would have been "equality" between Church-

[1] "Most of the godly able Nonconformist ministers, falsely called Presbyterians, of my acquaintance . . . are most episcopal Nonconformists, and would choose none but healing terms."—*National Churches*, p. 68.

[2] Neal, *History of the Puritans*, v. 72, 73.

[3] Calamy's *Abridgment of Baxter's Life*, i. 448.

[4] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, v. 184. On William's ecclesiastical views, see Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), iii. 74 ff.

men and Nonconformists rather than "toleration" of the second by the first and by the State—a distinction which even to this day some are not disposed to surrender.[1] But mere toleration could not be refused. Honesty in the fulfilment of promises demanded it; and besides (for human motives are always mixed) there was for some time to come, as we shall see, an impression strong upon many Churchmen that the granting of toleration would automatically suffice to bring Nonconformists gradually back to the Church again.[2] A Toleration Bill was introduced into the House of Lords on February 28, 1689, and went through.[3] Before it reached the Lower House a similar Bill had made its appearance there; and on May 24th the royal assent made toleration of Dissent the law of the land.[4] It must be admitted that the gift to the Nonconformists was the smallest that could be given if anything was to be given at all. The Act merely exempted certain persons from the pains and penalties of the Act of Uniformity, the Conventicle Act, and the Five Mile Act, and this upon stringent conditions:[5] it merely declared that to worship otherwise than according to Church of England forms and in Church of England edifices would not be looked upon as a punishable offence if certain rules were observed. It required those who wished to benefit to take the oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy and to make the statutory Declaration against Romish superstitions. It required Nonconformist ministers to subscribe the Articles with the exception of three referring to the traditions of the Church, to the Homilies, and to the consecration of Bishops and Ministers, a fourth Article—that on infant Baptism—being also excepted where Baptists were concerned: it required certification of Nonconformist places of worship by Bishops or Archdeacons or justices; and it required that during the time of worship doors must not be bolted or barred. An obvious Quaker objection was

[1] See for instance the apparent implication in Cornish, *A History of the English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, i. 141, 175, ii. 281. [2] See *infra*, p. 141.

[3] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xiv. 134.

[4] Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), iii. 81-89.

[5] For the Act, see Gould, *Documents relating to the Settlement of the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662* (ed. 1862), pp. 507-516.

met by the substitution in their case of a solemn declaration for the taking of oaths, provided that together with the declaration confession of faith both in the Trinity and in the inspiration of Scripture were made. Any one entering a certified Nonconformist service to disturb it rendered himself liable to fine. Neither Roman Catholics nor Unitarians, it must be noted, were to obtain any relief under the scheme. The whole thing, it will be seen, was in no sense an assertion of admission of the principle of religious freedom: it was merely a permission to certain persons to make with the State a bargain after whose ratification certain laws should not be enforced: it was really no more than the substitution of lighter fetters for those absolutely crippling ones which Nonconformity had worn before. If the conditions of toleration—the taking of oaths, registration, and the rest—were disregarded, Nonconformist worship was still a punishable crime: any one who tried to slip through those conditions might find the jaws of the Conventicle Act closing upon him sharply still. It is true that violation of the conditions was frequently ignored, particularly as the eighteenth century went on. But strictness would reawaken if it could; and we shall find that as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century certain magistrates, in a sudden intoxication of dislike for a Nonconformity grown too bold, were ready to put the Conventicle Act into force.[1] Nevertheless the boon, if intrinsically small, was relatively great. It was not yet three years since Nonconformist fortunes had been at their nadir; and now the sun had climbed high. The Indulgences of James had been little else than a crying of "Peace, Peace" when there was no peace, by mocking voices which no one could safely trust. There were many Nonconformists who only a little way behind them had experiences at which they shuddered still, sufferers whose smart was still sore and whose scars were still unhealed. Now, at any rate, there would be smarts and scars no more. An apparently irrevocable sentence of death had been lifted; and this more than in the way of respite. One cannot wonder that for many years to come Nonconformists kept gay and grateful cele-

[1] *Infra*, p. 297.

bration of all the events which had brought them deliverance from the Egypt of their long and cruel bondage. And even if they indulged some hopes which were soon to scatter—even if they supposed that between themselves and their erstwhile enemies a time of perfect amity had now set in—even if they saw visions and dreamed dreams which were to wait long for their realisation and which are, indeed, not fully realised yet—still they did well to rejoice and give thanks. For the modern historian, as he looks back over the far stretch of Nonconformist history from Nonconformity's first appearance until now, can find no moment of time which so definitely marks a new epoch in that history as does the Toleration of 1689. Whether or no the new opportunities which then descended upon Nonconformity were wisely used, it is certain that new opportunities did descend: whether or no Nonconformity fully recognised the new responsibilities, as well as the new privileges, which henceforth rested upon it, it is certain that both new privileges and new responsibilities were sent; and however many the remaining adversaries without and within may have been, and however sadly to some of them Nonconformity may have succumbed, it is certain that to Nonconformity there was opened a great and effectual door. For the Toleration Act signalised the close of Nonconformity's long struggle for existence, and conferred upon it in perpetuity the right to be.

Section 4

The Nonconformist Spirit: Retrospect and Prospect

The multiplicity of events which have thronged upon us since we commenced our survey of that Nonconformist struggle for existence which was inaugurated at the Restoration has compelled us to drop for the time what is after all our principal thread of thought. Only in an occasional allusion, or by a swift side-glance, have we touched upon the question as to how far the true Nonconformist ideal was being served or hindered by the different characters upon the crowded stage and by the different incidents in

which they bore a part. But at the point we have reached, we may so to say close our eyes for a little while upon the jostling multitude of facts, and turn ourselves in meditation to the deeper problem temporarily ignored. With the passing of the Toleration Act a new era for Nonconformity began. Though enemies still girt it round, and though the weapons which had hitherto menaced it had been blunted rather than sheathed, the extremity of danger had passed away. Something of Nonconformity's energy could now be spared for other enterprises than that of mere self-preservation: there was opportunity for some of the hitherto sealed springs of Nonconformist tendency to break forth; or one may put it that Nonconformity, able now to lift up its head and to rise from the purely defensive posture which it had necessarily maintained for so long, could show itself as it was. But it has to be added, too, that the direction in which Nonconformist self-development would proceed under these new circumstances of greater freedom depended in part upon the effects wrought in Nonconformity by those former circumstances which had made self-development impossible while they endured. The period of struggle for existence could not but leave behind it in Nonconformity some interior results to become formative or directive in their turn. The line on which this partially emancipated Nonconformity was henceforth to travel could scarcely help being deflected somewhat from the course it would have taken had there been no fight for emancipation to wage. What we have to do, therefore, is to enquire how the long battle which Nonconformity had maintained so bravely, together with the new relationships into which through that battle Nonconformity was driven and the new attitudes which through that battle Nonconformity was forced to assume—how far these things affected, for good or evil, Nonconformity's power of embodying the Nonconformist ideal. The Nonconformist spirit (it may be worth while at this juncture to set down the primary principle once more) is the spirit which holds that life must make organisation, that organisation is valueless unless it is thus made by life, that organisation ought to be the "natural and automatic producing, by the

existing life, of a system which that existing life finds necessary and helpful for its own health, and which, precisely because it is thus produced by life, becomes, one must not say the producer, but the deepener and intensifier, of life in its turn."[1] As concrete Nonconformity emerged from its long fight for the right to be, and stood facing the future, did it correspond more exactly, or less exactly, than when the fight began to what this spirit would expect its nominal representative to be? Was Nonconformity better equipped, or worse equipped, for the high task to which it was professedly vowed, as it reached the point where the old narrow road ran out upon the broader highway? These questions—inviting us as they do to both retrospective and prospective thought—may well detain us for a little here. Incidentally, too, the finding of answers to them will enable us (though most of the facts of the period have already been gathered) to pick up a few additional facts whose gathering would at any earlier stage have made us deviate too far from our appointed track.

If the presence of the Conformist spirit upon the field, and its triumph, in itself constituted a sufficient challenge to the Nonconformist spirit to do its best, a sufficient challenge was most assuredly thrown down. For one need not labour the point that those whose hearts and minds were ruled by the Conformist conception had been true to their accepted ideal, and that so far as the Church of England was concerned organisation and uniformity had won a victory all along the line. All that had happened since the Restoration of Charles the Second—all that had been done in connection with ecclesiastical affairs since the Act of Uniformity up to the failure of the Comprehension scheme after William and Mary received the crown — had been in the direction of hardening the framework of the Church, stereotyping her methods, removing whatever traces of elasticity could be suspected of remaining, and stopping up any smallest gaps at which the spirit of concession or compromise or even temporary unbending might slip in.[2] Rightly or wrongly,

[1] Vol. I. p. 4.

[2] In reference to the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and its consequences, J. R. Green observes, in often-quoted words, "The Church of England stood from

the principle of working from an absolutely rigid external organisation to the inward religious life had been settled in possession for all time. Certainly the Conformist spirit had ample opportunity of showing, within the region owning allegiance to the Established Church, what it was able to do. The task of determining how the opportunity was used, and estimating in detail the religious achievements which followed upon the new victory of the Conformist spirit in the Established Church, is one which the historian of that Church, rather than the historian of Nonconformity, must face. The only thing we need notice here (noticed it must be, since it makes a partial qualification of the statement that in the Church of England the Conformist idea had scored a perfect success) is the new illustration, offered almost immediately upon organisation's new triumph, of the law that with organisation's victory there almost always rises a movement witnessing to the need of something which organisation cannot give—the law that the Nonconformist spirit almost always raises its protest just as the iron ring of organisation closes up. One would have supposed that if there were any time when a Church based upon the Conformist principle might expect to have a clear field, at any rate so far as its own professed adherents were concerned, it would be the time when it had just asserted itself against its foes and had plainly shown, with the approbation of practically all its children, the line to which it intended to keep—such a time, in fact, as that which confronts a sweeping gaze from the Restoration up to 1689. Yet at the period we have reached there was stirring among certain adherents of the Established Church something which, whether those affected did or did not recognise the angel from whom the troubling of the waters came, was in reality a revolt against that very supremacy of organisation nominally accepted as right. The reign of Charles the Second saw the constitution of

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that moment isolated and alone among all the Churches of the Christian world. . . . And while thus cut off from all healthy religious communion with the world without, it sank into immobility within. With the expulsion of the Puritan clergy, all efforts after reform, all national development, suddenly stopped. From that time to this the Episcopal Church has been unable to meet the varying spiritual needs of its adherents by any modification of its government or its worship."—*History of the English People*, iii. 363.

those "religious societies" which during the reign of William and Mary developed such strength, and which were the forerunners of the "Methodist" societies of a little later day —these in their turn being destined to prove little rills feeding a broad river with its issue in a boundless sea. About 1678 some young men of London formed themselves into an association for religious discussion, reading of the Scriptures, and prayer, among their practical aims being the promotion of holy life in themselves and others, the conversion of souls, the relief of poverty, and the preaching of the Gospel both at home and abroad.[1] When it is said that this movement was in reality a protest of the Nonconformist spirit, it is not by any means meant that those taking part in it knew it to be such. As a matter of fact, they were passionately attached to the Established Church; and constant attendance at her worship and frequent participation in her Sacramental service were among the things enjoined. (It may be mentioned in passing, as a curiosity of the position, that because these societies had about them the appearance of something "secret," they were by some suspected of harbouring Roman Catholic plotters, as Quaker meetings had been suspected before them and as Methodist meetings were afterwards to be.) But when we look at the matter in its relation to ultimate spiritual forces and tendencies, it is clear that the "societies" represented dissatisfaction with the religious results achieved by the existing ecclesiastical organisation, a hunger for a deeper life, a longing to get back from circumference to centre and to transfer emphasis from the mere Conformist idea to a more vital point. Like the earlier Puritans, their members were in the grip of a spirit which they did not understand, whose deeper implications they could not read, whose further consequences they could not foresee. The "societies" were, in fact, the first sign of that coming resurrection of Puritanism within the Establishment which the Evangelical Revival was more fully to exemplify, and link themselves on to the Evangelical

[1] See Woodward, *Rise and Progress of the Religious Societies, etc.*, pp. 18 ff.; Kidder's *Life of Horneck* (Jackson's *Library of Christian Biography*, xii. 254 ff.); Secretan's *Life of Nelson*, pp. 91 ff.; Portus, *Caritas Anglicana*, pp. 9-12.

Revival by a very real bond. Through them, as through the Puritanism which had been and the Puritanism which was to be, the Nonconformist spirit sought to make its protest as the dominance of organisation became completer and more firmly based. But significant to the larger outlook as is the movement which the "religious societies" represent, it calls for but a scarcely perceptible qualification of the statement that, as regards the Established Church, the victory of organisation and of the Conformist idea was complete, and that in the systematised arrangements of that Church at the time of the Toleration Act an uncompromising challenge was flung at Nonconformity's feet. In the Church of England, as it faced Nonconformity at the beginning of the new time, the Conformist principle was splendidly represented and faithfully served.

Turning to the more important, but at the same time the more complicated, question as to how far concrete Nonconformity (more especially that part of it which was *essentially* rather than *accidentally* Nonconformist) was fitted, after 1689, to represent the true Nonconformist ideal, it is with the Independents or, as we can alternatively call them, the Congregationalists, that we may conveniently begin. And of these, it can hardly be said that they had become better equipped, by the series of events and crises they had lived through since the Restoration of Charles the Second, to play their part as exponents of the principle that organisation should be made by life. Indeed, from an earlier date than that of the Restoration the succession of events had tended to impair, rather than to improve, Independency's equipment for such a task. We noted at earlier stages how at the very beginning of its career Independency failed in entire exemplification of the theory it held;[1] and then how, by force of circumstances, the danger of thrusting that theory into the background of thought, and of drawing the principle of toleration to the front of the stage as the matter of primary importance, had come to threaten Independent thought.[2] All that had befallen since had only served to intensify the danger; for through its long agony, lasting from 1660 to 1689, what could Independency or indeed any form of Non-

[1] Vol. I. pp. 200-204. [2] *Ibid.* pp. 330, 403.

conformity, think of save the imminent question whether it was to live or to die? One could no more expect it to spend its time and strength in dwelling upon or developing the ultimate and original principle for whose advocacy it had been instituted than one could expect a plea for even his most dearly cherished opinions from some man who, as he drowns, is calculating his chances of grasping the rescuer's rope in time. Naturally, therefore, by the time the Toleration Act settled the question of life or death, the habit of looking upon the advocacy of toleration as its actual *raison d'être* had gone far to engrain itself in the bone and sinew of Congregationalism; and almost without Congregationalism's own knowledge, the device upon the Congregational shield had changed. It is easy to say, of course, that once toleration was secured, Congregationalism should have returned to its central and really fundamental ideal. Unfortunately, a cause for which men have suffered the loss of all things—even though it was at first only taken up on the way to some goal beyond itself—acquires a sanctity which it does not swiftly lose, and which still holds the worship of those who originally meant to do no more than pause for a moment as they went by. Moreover, the question of toleration itself was not really settled on its merits by the Act of 1689. That Act in no way conceded the principle: it merely provided that under certain circumstances Nonconformity was not to be penalised: it still left worship other than worship according to the rites of the Establishment under the stigma of being a crime, though a crime which might be leniently treated or excused. How impossible it was for one who really embraced the idea of toleration to be content with the Act may be realised from the fact that John Locke—whose *Epistola de Tolerantia*, originally written in 1685, appeared in English in 1689—was altogether unsatisfied.[1] Locke himself pushed the toleration doctrine to its furthest point. "The intellectual freedom of each person, under whatever civil or ecclesiastical institutions, was his ideal, rather than the collective liberty of societies; for he saw that societies, whether Churches or States, often use their collective liberty to crush persons and

[1] Baron King's *Life and Letters of John Locke* (ed. Bohn), p. 176.

their independent position."[1] Of course the Toleration Act by no means embodied such an ideal as this of Locke. Nonconformists were still excluded from positions of public service and trust. As we have noted, Roman Catholics and Unitarians were not included in its scope. There was consequently much left to do before toleration could be declared victorious; and Congregationalism, fixed as it was upon the toleration idea, would naturally enough use the measure of freedom now won as a weapon for the winning of yet larger freedom, and would thus come to concentrate its gaze upon the toleration idea more fixedly still. But this is not all. There could not but be consequences from all this in respect of the manner in which Congregationalism henceforward read and understood its own constitutive Church-idea. A Church-idea of some sort, of course, it must still possess, even though the great Church-idea of its beginning—the idea of the Church as a body of Christian men and women through whose united minds and wills the mind and will of the living Head of the Church were revealed, through whose united voices the voice of the living Head of the Church was heard, through whose united hearts the very life of the living Head of the Church was beating—even though that faded and failed. And now Independency's emphasised concentration upon the ideal of freedom tended to mould, and reflect itself in, Independency's Church-idea. Congregationalism came quite naturally to create a correspondence between the two conceptions—between the conception of what Congregationalism was bent upon attaining and the conception of what, in its essential content, in its ultimate bases, Congregationalism was. Circumstances helped to make the adjustment easy. The cause of freedom on the wider scale was of course the cause of democracy: Congregationalism's passion for religious freedom threw the majority of Congregationalists into sympathy (whether rightly or wrongly in particular instances is not here in question) with the cause of freedom on the wider scale, with the democratic cause; and reference was earlier made to the fact that superficially—though only superficially—the method of Congregational or Independent Church order and

[1] *Locke*, by Alexander Campbell Fraser, p. 92.

management was of a democratic cast.[1] In reality Independency was no affair of self-government, or of decisions taken through a majority vote: it was a matter of a united submission to the Spirit of the Church's Head, followed by a united translation and declaration of that Spirit communicated to one and all alike. But in practice—since human opinions and human preferences would not allow themselves to be utterly subdued, and would, spite of all precaution, aspiration, and prayer, mingle themselves with what the inspirations of the higher Spirit taught—there had to be give and take, clashing opinions and the yielding of the few to the many, however fully it was recognised that this was but a makeshift for a nobler way. From the beginning things had been so. Still, if only the loftier and original conception had been preserved, there might have been a steadfast if slow ascent to the realisation of it as Congregational history went on. But now, with Congregationalism bent upon that freedom which was democracy's ideal, and with Congregationalism already democratic to the outward eye, the idea that Congregationalism stood for the democratic method applied to Church affairs found its chance and slipped quickly and easily in as at an open and unguarded gate. The worst thing about it (though unrealised at the time and not properly realised now) is that this was really an intrusion of the Conformist spirit into a Church professedly consecrated to the Nonconformist spirit and idea. That Congregationalism represents "self-government," the settlement of Church affairs by a sort of process of parliamentary debate and division, has been assumed by practically all historians who have touched the theme; and worse still, it has to be confessed that many Congregationalists themselves have accepted and still accept the reading as correct, have acted upon it and do act upon it still. It was as a result of Congregationalism's transference of emphasis to the "toleration" and "freedom" idea that the misconception came in. Thenceforward there was inevitable loss of spiritual positiveness in Congregationalism's conception of itself and of its call: thenceforward there was too sadly small an effort to make things after the pattern which had been shown it in

[1] Vol. I. p. 198.

the Mount; and of the re-emergence of the high idealism of its origin there came to be less and less chance as the years went on, since it was as democracy applied to Church affairs that Congregationalism stood, and was for the most part content to stand, before the world.

If we may, for a passing moment, look further ahead, we may add that this democratising of Congregationalism's Church-idea led to large results later on, over and above its immediate and direct results in clouding or relegating to the background the truer Church-idea on which Congregationalism ought to have built. It linked itself at last to another tendency which at the time of the Toleration Act was no more than latent—the tendency, left over from the Cromwellian period, towards a certain sort of alliance with the State, or at any rate with one of the sections therein. Entirely latent, of course, this tendency was all through Nonconformity's struggle for existence compelled to be; and when at last it emerged, the alliance with the State to which it seemed to point was necessarily, under the changed conditions, a totally different kind of alliance from that which the Cromwellian period had seen. Nevertheless, the existence of the tendency beneath the surface, and its readiness to link itself with the democratised Congregational Church-idea, are facts which should be as it were laid by on some easily accessible shelf of memory, whence at the fitting time they may be taken down. And with this done, we may repeat, as the matter of immediate concern, that at and from the passing of the Toleration Act this democratisation of the Congregational Church-idea took place.

This would of itself have been sufficient to impair Congregationalism's power of witnessing to the full and true Nonconformist ideal. But one other thing calls for remark. It has been noticed that between Presbyterians and Congregationalists a certain approximation set in after the ejectments of 1662, in the sense that the Presbyterian congregations became Independent at least in outward appearance.[1] The setting up of the complete Presbyterian organisation and discipline was impossible; and the Presbyterians, however they might cherish the tradition of it and

[1] *Supra*, p. 34.

the desire for it, had to be content with meeting together in their separate Churches as best they could, just as the Independents or Congregationalists met. They were not Congregationalists: their own special organisation—or, as time went on, some compromise between that and the episcopal organisation in possession—was what they still wished to see established; and Philip Henry's dread of being turned into "flat Independents"[1] lived on. But by force of circumstances they had to carry the Independent look; and it was into closer relation with the Independents that they were steadily driven. And this fellowship, necessary and wise and right as it was, had its part in obscuring Congregationalism's understanding of itself. What Congregationalism saw confronting it, as it faced its Presbyterian fellow-sufferers and allies, was a collection of Churches, each practically self-contained and self-governing like its own, with little more difference from its own than this—that to the Presbyterian minister there was committed a larger authority over his flock than the Congregational pastor owned, this larger authority being the remnant out of the scheme of general Presbyterian "discipline" saved from the general Presbyterian wreck. The Presbyterian minister, according to the real Presbyterian idea, was ordained to his ministry and appointed to his place, not by the congregation, but by the presbytery—the presbytery having synods above it in its turn;[2] and though presbyteries and synods had gone, the Presbyterian minister was still, in his people's eyes and in his own, clothed with the authority which they would have imparted to him had they been there.[3] Presbyterianism, notwithstanding its outward approximation to the Independent type, still stood for the Conformist principle that organisation comes before life. It could not be but that Congregationalism should have its grasp upon the Nonconformist principle weakened by its close relations with those on the other side. The danger was that for many Congregationalists the main motive of Nonconformity should come to lie *solely* where for the Presbyterians it lay—

[1] *Supra*, p. 76. [2] Vol. I. pp. 336, 337.

[3] See on this Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 453-455.

in the desire for a more evangelical religion than the Establishment seemed to afford. That the danger was real, history has abundantly proved. If, indeed, Congregationalism had up to now preserved its first ideal of the Church, and clung to its first basal conception that organisation must be made by life, such association with Presbyterianism as circumstances made necessary might have been formed and worked without leaving any traces upon Congregationalism's Church-ideal. But when a Congregationalism which was already degenerating came into contact with a Presbyterianism which had shed its extreme features and looked so much like what Congregationalism had come to be, the difference between the real Congregationalism and the real Presbyterianism tended more and more to be forgotten and set aside. How far this process of forgetfulness has been carried by 1689 is shown in the readiness of many Independents, as reported above,[1] to seek inclusion in the Comprehension scheme of that year. While earlier schemes of the kind had hung in the air, it had been as concerning Presbyterians and Episcopalians alone that the negotiations had been carried on: had the negotiations on any of these earlier occasions been crowned with success, the Presbyterians would have been gathered within the fold of the Establishment while the Congregationalists still pursued their destiny without. But the tightening association through the years had told: Congregationalism's power of discernment had grown dim; and by the time that William and Mary came to the throne, Congregationalists had so linked themselves with Presbyterians as to forget the fundamental divergences which ought to have prevented for the first any thought of that Comprehension which the second might with smaller sacrifice of real principle entertain. What had happened was that a changing Congregationalism had found itself set in closest relations with a changing Presbyterianism (although the change in Presbyterianism was not a change in essential spirit, as the change in Congregationalism was)—that the changes in each had happened to bring about a superficial likeness, not perfect but nevertheless striking, between the two — and that Congrega-

[1] *Supra*, p. 116.

tionalism, under the impression of this likeness, tended to define and conceive itself as against the background of Presbyterianism, and according to the degree in which the likeness held good. Only this meant, for Congregationalism, that the Conformist principle, the principle of the Presbyterianism with which it compared itself, made completer capture of it, and that its original Nonconformist principle was still more completely thrust out. The right relation between organisation and life—the idea that the first was valuable only as it was the product and out-working of the second —the contention that the entire process of construction must run from the religious centre to the ecclesiastical circumference, and not *vice versa*—these things slipped down the scale. All this, of course, was largely instinctive. To say all this is to define for a modern reader the results which forces, undefined and unrecognised at the time, were bringing about. But the forces did their work. In sum, then, and linked with what has been said before, the matter stands thus. Congregationalism, having started from far away, had been changing into a sort of religious democracy. It had, while this change was going on, been in close association with a Presbyterianism which, having started from a point on quite the other side of the circle, was coming round to be a similar religious democracy somewhat less pronounced ; and the very association, with the likeness and unlikeness it emphasised, had helped (as for that matter one would expect it to help) to drug Congregationalism's sense of what in essential and original principle it had been, and of what it still ought to be.

Turning to the Baptists, the verdict must be that with them, too, realisation of and care for the true Nonconformist idea were becoming dim. They were liable to the same "democratisation" as that which was insinuating itself into Congregationalism ; but there was something more. In their special doctrine they had, of course, a very definite and visible standard round which to rally ; and this necessarily helped to keep a denominational sense very keenly alive, having among other effects that of causing Baptists to hold aloof from suggested Comprehension schemes. In the very year (1689) in which the failure of the last Compre-

hension plan was so sharply regretted by Nonconformists of other orders, the Calvinistic Baptists held an Assembly in London—attended by delegates from nearly all parts of the country—as if to prove that the voice of their testimony, at any rate, however it might be with others, was not going to be stilled.[1] But it was rather in the interests of their doctrine of baptism than in the interests of the Nonconformist ideal that the Baptists ceaselessly emphasised the line of separation between all other religious bodies and themselves; so that what we noted, when dealing with Baptist origins, as an antecedently probable danger was becoming real. To make an idea which, however important, is not really the vital Church-idea—to make it the distinguishing or foundation idea of any religious fellowship, is dangerous inasmuch as the distinguishing idea easily comes to be looked upon as the vital Church-idea after all, since the foundation idea and the vital idea *ought* to be one and the same.[2] The special Baptist doctrine was naturally enough coming to be the most prominent thing in Baptist eyes and for Baptist thought. The tendency was helped by the controversies which from the time of their origin the Baptists had carried on with those who differed from them on what they held so important and so dear. To an early public disputation between the Baptists and Featley, and to another public disputation, contemplated but prevented, between the Baptists and Calamy, reference has before been made.[3] These were but instances of what went on at intervals down to the time our survey has reached. The dispute between Baxter and Tombes at Kidderminster is famous; and others—such as that between Baptists and Quakers at High Wycombe in 1670—are on the records for those who care to search.[4] Repeated controversy always results in investing the controverted point with yet larger importance than it formerly seemed to possess; and thus to maintain their witness on the question of baptism came to appear in Baptist estimation the chief matter for which the

[1] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, iii. 246 ff.; Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, i. 478 ff.

[2] Vol. I. p. 303.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 329, 345.

[4] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, ii. 231, iii. 311, 312; Neal, *History of the Puritans*, v. 188, etc.

Baptist Churches lived. Moreover, the spirit of controversy, once called in by any body of associated men for the purpose of forwarding the interests of the association as a whole, may swiftly become a somewhat divisive influence within the association itself; and as a matter of fact, the Baptists had by this time—in addition to the main cleavage between the Calvinistic and General sections—matters of controversy on their hands in respect of singing at public worship and on the more serious question whether or not participation in the communion of the Lord's Supper should be allowed with and to any others than those baptized in the Baptist way. The first of these was to find amicable settlement before many years had passed;[1] but the second was to have far longer life and, indeed, continues to be agitated in some quarters still.[2] Thus were new centres of interest created—each of them absorbing some of the ardour and some of the strength which the cause of the Nonconformist spirit and ideal needed so much. In noticing all this, no blame is imputed. But noticed it has to be in any estimate of the situation from the standpoint of our present survey; for it serves to indicate how the Baptists, as well as the Congregationalists, were losing realisation of, and concentration upon, the essential Nonconformist ideal which had inspired that early Independency whence both alike had sprung,—and doing so (this making the process perhaps all the swifter and certainly all the less likely to be suspected by those in whom it was going on) under natural tendencies to which the circumstances of the time gave rise.

It remains to take a glance at the Quakers, the latest religious society through which the Nonconformist spirit had sought to find embodiment, and the society to which in many respects the largest share of that spirit had fallen. But here too the prospect for the future was darkening, rather than brightening, at the date of the Toleration Act, and the errors of the past were threatening to have baneful influence upon the community in the days to come, to impair its

[1] Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, i. 520, ii. 373, 374.

[2] The dispute led to litigation in the case of St. Mary's Baptist Church, Norwich; and in the account of the suit much of the history of the controversy in the denomination may be found (*St. Mary's Baptist Chapel, Norwich, Case of 1860*, edited by William Norton).

spiritual vitality and to make the glow of its witness dim. Previous allusion[1] has been made to the increased attention which in 1666 and afterwards Fox gave to that question of organisation which had from the beginning been left without its due care, and to the fact that in this late realisation of its importance dangers lay. The apparatus of "meetings" which Fox set up—monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, women's meetings, an annual meeting for the county as a whole—roused discontent in many Quaker minds. In the first place, the whole scheme smacked too much of human wisdom, at any rate for those who objected to it, thus running counter to that depreciation of intellect which was supposed by a growing number to be an essential feature of the Quaker religious outlook. It may be stated here—as a point which will meet us again—that intellectual confusion, following upon depreciation of intellect itself, had a good deal to do with whatever religious decay Quakerism went through. We noticed, when we were dealing with the beginnings of Quakerism, how easily Fox's doctrine of the "inner light"—though to him it was above all things a doctrine of inner *life*—might be exaggerated or distorted into an idea that Quakers had discovered some infallible supernatural substitute for any intellectual processes whatever that could be brought to bear upon religion and its related themes.[2] This distortion or exaggeration was already taking place, and could not but bear its fruits. Those who had embraced such an idea as this were not likely to view with complacency the introduction of a carefully thought-out "disciplinary" scheme, even though its author were Fox himself. Besides, the "discipline" which the meetings were to exercise was resented as implying a departure from the original Quaker belief that guidance was given to every Christian man by the holy light within. This second objection is of course closely related to the first; for if depreciation of intellect had not existed, and had not resulted with the objectors (as it always must result) in an actual enfeebling of intellect, they would have seen that whatever professed to be or to bring such guidance needed some standard whereby it could itself be tested.

[1] *Supra*, pp. 87, 88.

[2] Vol. I. pp. 366, 367.

But in this instance, as by larger sections of Quakerism in subsequent years, the penalty of holding intellect in contempt had to be paid in intellectual confusion ; and essential, not to say obvious, points were missed. These general objections were tangled up with disputes as to whether or no Quaker marriages should or might, after being celebrated according to Quaker rites, be safeguarded by an additional civil procedure, and as to whether under stress of persecution it was permissible to hide (the discontented ones maintaining the positive in both cases) ; and to these things was added a charge of autocracy against Fox himself, resentment at this autocracy being with many the sum and substance of the whole affair. Had Fox attacked the question of organisation at an earlier time, all this might have been avoided ; for acceptance of his prescribed organisation, wedded as it would have been to his general views, would have seemed the natural thing. But the emergence of the question at this time and in this way made for trouble. John Wilkinson and John Story of Westmorland became leaders of discontent : they found many followers, some of them men of position and influence : even George Whitehead was for a little while inclined to let himself be enticed into the schismatical ranks ; and during the seventies and eighties of the seventeenth century the controversy was loud.[1] To Fox, the entire anti-organisation movement was a sign of, and in its turn was making for, a sad descent from the high level at which Quakerism had aimed from the first and which for a time it had attained ; and, indeed, the rejection of his organisation scheme, inasmuch as it was engineered by men who tampered with the early Quaker heroisms and appeared to hold them lightly, who were ready to flee in the hour of trial and in other ways to make concessions he abhorred, only seemed to him to prove how greatly the scheme was required. On the other side, there was no lack of vehement disquisition and heated rejoinder. For a moment it appeared in 1676 as though the controversy was to end, for Story and Wilkinson retracted in that year. But they retracted the retractation, withdrew from the Society,

[1] For the Story and Wilkinson controversy, see Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 302-304 ; Gough, *History of the Quakers*, iii. 9-24.

and induced many to join them as they went up and down the land. It was but a temporary success, for in the end many of the seceders returned, and in the first years of the eighteenth century the opposition Society, so to call it, melted away.[1] But harm had been done, and it was long before Quakerism ceased to feel the effects of the dispute. And at the time which we have now reached, the controversy was still going on. The Quakers were a house divided against itself. The question of organisation and its relation to life, not having been properly faced at the beginning, was forcing itself upon them and driving lines of cleavage through them as it did so; and in the atmosphere which disputation created, the Quaker experience tended to become less and less that rich experience of the direct communication of divine life from God to man which it had been, and the Quaker testimony to the necessity and reality of that experience consequently sounded more faintly across the world.

So once again, the Nonconformist spirit was being but poorly served. Even its professed friends were blundering as they served it, and there were scarce any that understood. Upon the future (had there been discerning eyes to see) the clouds hung dark. In 1689, as in 1660, the Nonconformist spirit, sweeping the skies from some far-off watch-tower to search for stars of promise, would have seen no star that heralded a repetition of Wiclif's shining day. For the resultant tendency out of all that has been mentioned was assuredly towards raising obstacles in the way of progressive self-realisation of the Nonconformist spirit and ideal, rather than towards making their paths straight.

[1] Sewel says they "vanished as snow in the fields" (as previous note, ii. 303).

CHAPTER II

THE DECLINE OF RELIGION

SECTION 1

Rest and New Danger

1689–1714

AUTHORITIES.—For the general history of the time, we have Macaulay's *History of England* to cover the reign of William, Stanhope's *History of England during the Reign of Anne* up to 1714, and Burnet's *History of My Own Time* to cover both reigns. With Anne's reign Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* begins to serve us. Luttrell's *Brief Relation of State Affairs* also continues to help. On the religious side, Burnet is as useful as on the secular. Stoughton's *History of Religion in England* is full and impartial as before. The *History of Dissenters*, by Bogue and Bennett, though a very uninspired record, gives much information. *The History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, by Skeats and Miall, though also a compilation without any literary pretensions, presents a crowded mass of facts, many of them extremely interesting, concerning the various Nonconformist leaders of the time, besides chronicling the more public and larger-scale events. The denominational *Histories* previously used may still be referred to, though Sewel's *History of the Quakers* practically ceases with William's death. Gough's *History of the Quakers* continues to a later date. Wallace's *Anti-Trinitarian Biography* is very useful for the Socinian side, and Abbey and Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century* for the Church of England.

UPON the passing of the Toleration Act a decline of vital religion set in, to endure until the Evangelical Revival kindled warmth again. Both in the Established Church and in Nonconformity the down-grade movement went on; nor is it, perhaps, surprising that this was so. The long struggle, which had been on the side of the Church a struggle for Nonconformity's suppression, and on the side of Nonconformity a struggle for existence, was done. The greatest and fiercest battle of the campaign had at any rate been fought, whatever subsequent skirmishes or rearguard actions or dropping shots there might yet be. Naturally enough,

something like lassitude set in. The Church of England, although it had not succeeded in obtaining the religious monopoly for which it had striven, could rejoice in that assertion of the principle of uniformity—of the supremacy of organisation—which it had made in 1662; and the process of consolidation and completion under the guidance of that principle could go on. Nonconformity had won the right to be, and could lay aside its arms and take its breath. But neither the process of consolidating and completing organisation nor the process, or lack of process, implied in "taking breath," make an atmosphere favourable to spirituality of the more ardent type; and so for years to come the spiritual thermometer went down. And Nonconformity—the reference here is particularly to that section of it which was really descended from the original Nonconformist stock, not to that which had been so to say "grafted in"—was the less fitted to encounter the dangers of a time of relaxation, since its hold upon its own positive principle had for the most part, as we have noted, grown so slack. It is these years of religious decline we have next to survey.

It is convenient, however, since it is Nonconformity's fortunes with which we are chiefly concerned, to take the period running from 1689 to 1714 by itself. For this period shows us Nonconformity at rest after its charter had been won, and then suddenly exposed to renewed assault, not long enduring but sharp while it did endure; and it shows us also how Nonconformity, by reason of the imperfect self-understanding into which it had permitted itself to fall, by reason of the mists through which its own original positive principle was seen, was unequipped for either the new rest or the new danger, and manifested under both a lack of that warm and vital religion which a firmer grasp upon its own original positive principle would undoubtedly have enabled it to preserve.

To review the chief facts of the period is naturally our first call. Of William's reign it may at any rate be said that in respect of size and numbers it was a time of Nonconformist growth, as might have been expected in view of the new opportunities which the Toleration Act provided; and Nonconformist places of worship sprang up all over the

land. In some cases it was with a touch of fear and trembling that the builders did their work: the shadow of what had been lay too close behind to be altogether forgotten; nor was it always possible quite to banish the haunting fear that the present patch of sunlight in which Nonconformity was walking might at some time or other be eclipsed again. At Tintwistle, for example, caution impelled the emancipated Nonconformists, as they saw their Church go up, to insert in the trust-deed a clause providing that if "hard times" returned, the building might be used as a school.[1] Sometimes, as though a too daring use of the new privileges might involve risk of having them revoked, Dissenting meeting-houses were hidden behind ordinary dwellings.[2] But in spite of such a wholly natural looking "before and after" as this, hopes were high. London saw not a few Churches put up, and not a few buildings of other orders—such as the unused Halls of the City Companies—adapted for purposes of worship:[3] in many instances all over the country congregations which had hitherto hidden themselves in secret places came out and, heedless of the timorous considerations just alluded to, set their tabernacles boldly before the public eye:[4] so full and rapid, indeed, did the stream flow that during the end of William's reign there came into existence more than a thousand Nonconformist meeting-places of various kinds.[5] The larger number were Presbyterian, the Congregationalists, however, making a very good second. "In the Call Lane, betwixt the back gates of the quondam Chantry and Mr. Harrison's garden, those of the Congregational Persuasion built a stately chapel or meeting-house (with a turret upon the leaded roof) *anno* 1691."[6] The progress of the Baptists was less rapid: in explanation of which fact it may perhaps be conjectured that the definiteness of the special Baptist doctrine had almost compelled those who held it to declare their Baptist faith in defiance of conse-

[1] *Nonconformity in Cheshire* (edited by W. Urwick), pp. 354, 355.
[2] Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, ii. 303.
[3] See various cases given by Wilson, as previous note.
[4] Murch (*History of the Presbyterian and General Baptist Churches in the West of England*) gives instances at Bath and elsewhere.
[5] Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 507, 508.
[6] Thoresby, *Ducatus Leodensis*, p. 79.

quences even before the Toleration Act was passed—that there was consequently, on the passing of the Act, no such marked avowal of Baptist principles hitherto veiled as might take place in the case of Presbyterians and Congregationalists whose courage had not been of superlative rank—and that Baptist development proceeded on only natural lines, failing accordingly to receive the sudden impulse and acceleration which in 1689 some other denominations would feel. The Quakers claimed their full share in the benefits of the new *régime*, and, changing from the policy which had refused to fulfil the conditions of permitted worship under the Indulgence of Charles the Second [1] and had simply gone on its way careless whether Kings and authorities smiled or frowned, obtained as many as two hundred and thirty-nine licences (one hundred and thirty-one temporary, one hundred and eight permanent) within two years after toleration became law.[2] So far as outward expansion is concerned, Nonconformity of nearly every description has a good record to show for the years which immediately followed upon persecution's death. If it had rest from fightings, it found other work to do and did it with its might.

Already, however, there were signs that the storm which had held the skies for so long might still have some thunderclaps in reserve, and might discharge them before making its final retreat. On the part of not a few Churchmen dislike for Nonconformity flamed up from its embers and grew hotter as William's reign passed on, becoming with some so hot as to merit the name of hatred rather than dislike. The reasons for this are easy to guess, lying as they do in the general nature of the religious situation. For one thing, Nonconformity, useful though it had been as a weapon for the saving of Protestantism and the Church, was essentially no less detestable than it had been before; and now that it had served its purpose, the smile with which Churchmen had

[1] *Supra*, p. 76.

[2] See *Parliamentary Papers*, 1853, lxxviii. 164 (British Museum). Page 82 of Return ordered by Parliament on Feb. 23, 1853. The number of Baptist licences for the same period was 16. Of definitely Congregational and Presbyterian there were only 4 and 19 respectively. But many Churches of both these orders were licensed as "Protestant" or "Protestant Dissenters." The number of these was 158.

brought themselves to regard it when it was a question of winning its support automatically stiffened again. The King, and perhaps still more the Queen, were far too lavish of their favours to the schismatics, and were known to be but half content with the toleration already bestowed. But what was to them a stinted dole was overflowing generosity in Churchmen's eyes, so that fear of having to grant more induced an attitude of regret for promises already made and of grudgingness in carrying them out. The temper of the clergy, moreover, was roused by William's failure to summon Convocation for many years—this failure being doubtless retaliation for Convocation's treatment of the Comprehension Bill; and although the efforts made by some (Atterbury being chief) to prove that Convocation might sit, if it chose, without any royal call elicited sharp rejoinders from Churchmen of differing views, the Bishops being in this matter less "advanced" than the lower clerical ranks, they bore witness to the growth of a High Church sentiment too strong to be despised.[1] And whatever view might be held as to the necessity or otherwise for the Sovereign's warrant, the withholding of it was very naturally interpreted as a slight, not only by those of Atterbury's way of thinking, but by the Church as a whole. This, together with the Sovereigns' known partiality towards the Dissenters, gave to Churchmen's feeling for Nonconformity a further push in that hostile direction to which it already inclined. Most powerful of all, possibly, was disappointment that Nonconformity could be no more bribed into surrender by the gift of toleration than coerced into it by the pressure of the strong arm. Burnet was the spokesman for a good many in averring that he expected the Nonconformists in the end to return to the Establishment of their own accord.[2] Burnet's expectation

[1] On the Convocation matter, consult Lathbury, *History of Convocation* (2nd ed.), pp. 343 ff., also Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 189 ff.

[2] *Memorial to the Princess Sophia*, p. 92. "A little more continued moderation, and some small abatements of things . . . would do the business." Perhaps some excuse for the mistake may lie in the fact that so many Nonconformists had been prepared to accept the abortive Comprehension Bill (*supra*, pp. 115, 116). But the strong minority against it should not have been forgotten, nor should a temporary aberration have been taken to indicate a permanent mood. It should be said that some doubt exists whether this work is correctly ascribed to Burnet. But in any case it is an expression of opinion from an evidently important quarter.

may have been based on the quite sound idea that opinions passionately clung to in a time of stress are often lightlier held in time of ease: a few years later on, in fact, there were, as we shall see, quite sufficient defections from Nonconformity to show that Burnet had not been wholly wrong; but those who had supposed that the Nonconformists would be like petulant children, and would fling away at the moment of receiving it the gift which relenting authority, after protracted forbidding, at length bestowed, found that their calculations had been sadly astray. To these the spectacle of Nonconformity's expansion during William's reign must have been a bitter one indeed. Under a combination of influences such as these there returned into many quarters, if not the old spirit of fierce determination that Nonconformity must die, at least a spirit of sullen resentment which would not fail to seize the chance of annoying Nonconformity even to the point of crippling it, if such a chance should come. "We were all soon convinced," writes Burnet, "that there was a sort of clergyman among us that would never be satisfied as long as the toleration was continued; and they seemed resolved to give it out that the Church was in danger till a prosecution of dissenters should again be set on foot: nor could they look at a man with patience, nor speak of him with temper, who did not agree with them in these things."[1] A little later on he remarks that though a section of the clergy "did not envy the dissenters the ease that the toleration gave them"—adding, "I do freely own that I was of this number"—yet the bulk of them ran the other way, "so that the moderate party was far outnumbered."[2] This is significant enough. But though the spirit of persecution was there, it was compelled to restrain itself through William's reign; and the only thing it could attempt was interference with and annoyance of some of the Nonconformist seminaries and some of those who, like Frankland and Oldfield, were at their head.[3] Even this project fared badly for the time being, though it was to

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iv. 206.
[2] *Ibid.* iv. 383.
[3] Calamy, *Abridgment of Baxter's Autobiography*, i. 551, 552; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), i. 299, 300.

be renewed from another quarter and in legal form in the last days of the succeeding reign; for the King's intervention brought it sharply to a halt. The will to oppress was present, but opportunity tarried.

With Anne upon the throne, the opportunity arrived. Anne was herself fanatically High Church, though to prevent misunderstanding it may be as well to explain the sense in which the term is to be read. The High Churchism of Anne's time, and of Anne herself, was not that of Laud. High Churchism of Laud's type had vanished for the time being, though the nineteenth century was to see its revival in more than its old strength. At the beginning of the eighteenth century High Churchism simply meant tyrannical and exclusive Churchism: there was no question of a return upon the Fathers or of a *rapprochement* with Rome. The High Churchman was, in fact, as fanatically anti-Roman as anybody else. But to be "High Church" was to be very jealous for the Church's special prerogatives, to gaze with supercilious contempt upon all who severed themselves from her fold, and to look upon her as being in a very special sense as Zion the perfection of beauty out of which God did shine. In such a sense, Anne was High Church; and this with a passion partly real, partly simulated. That she sincerely desired the grandeur of the Church of England, and that she looked upon the very existence of Dissenters as implying that something was being subtracted from the grandeur the Church of England ought to possess, is not to be doubted. But Anne's position was peculiar; and circumstances drove her to display the appearance of a zeal even hotter than that which she really felt. She was a Stuart: her sympathies were naturally with the family to which she belonged; and notwithstanding the Act of Settlement of 1701 she cherished a secret hope that her brother, the "Pretender," might, at her death, find his way to the throne. The Pretender himself declared after Anne's death that he had refrained from any attempt at asserting his rights because he well knew the "good intentions" towards him which she entertained, "which were unfortunately prevented by her deplorable death."[1] Secret

[1] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, vii. 21, 22.

Anne's hope had to be, for to declare her brother's title valid would be to invalidate her own; but those who were near her person knew that it was entertained.[1] For that matter, the desired restoration of the Stuart line might actually have come about if the Pretender had been willing to renounce his Roman Catholic faith (a renunciation which, to his credit, he steadfastly refused to make); for all through William's reign a purely political reaction had been gathering force, to come to its full strength in the time of Anne, and to reach such a pitch by the close of Anne's reign that in the opinion of some of her contemporaries, a prolongation of her life for three months might easily have put the Hanoverian succession in grave jeopardy.[2] It was the old story. The people, while passionately alive to the dangers of Romanism (and both under William and under Anne anti-Catholic legislation was pressed[3]), had little love for change except as change was necessary to keep that danger at arm's length; and so soon as the Revolution had swept the danger clear away, the movement of reaction—helped doubtless by William's favouritism towards his Dutch followers and by other things—began. But whatever the chances for and against a Stuart restoration may at any time have been, Anne's own sympathies went out to her brother in his exile; and her own death, she at any rate tried to hope, would be the signal for his return. But then if this hope were ever to be realised, it was all the more necessary that any suspicion of Roman Catholic leanings on her part should be dispelled, and that the favour of the Church of England should be held fast. And this in its turn tended to the manifestation of disfavour towards the Nonconformists for whom the Church of England had no favour, since in this way assurance of the Church's favour to Anne herself might be made doubly sure. So far as Anne was personally concerned, religious leaning and political

[1] For instance, the Duke of Buckingham (Macpherson, *Original Papers containing the Secret History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover*, ii. 327-331).

[2] This was Lord Chesterfield's view. On this whole matter consult Lewis Melville, *The First George*, i. 150-187.

[3] See Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), i. 335 ff. Bolingbroke told the exiled James that "the people would rather accept a *Turk than a Catholic*" (*Stuart Papers, Historical MSS. Commission*, i. 50).

expediency spoke with united voice. And under a sovereign whom policy, as well as conviction, rendered a fanatical partisan of the Established Church—this condition of affairs coinciding with a recrudescence of anti-Nonconformist feeling on the part of the Church itself—Nonconformists had little to hope for and much to fear, and could surmise with reasonable certainty that troublous times were once again in store.

From the very commencement of the reign the prophetic shadow of new dangers began to stretch across the Nonconformist road. The Queen, in her first speech to the Privy Council, significantly declared that she should look for advice to those who supported the established order in Church as well as in State; while in proroguing Parliament, though she declared her intention of maintaining the Toleration Act, she so qualified the promise that it became almost a threat. "My own principles," she said, "must always keep me entirely firm to the interest and religion of the Church of England, and will incline me to countenance those who have the truest zeal to support it."[1] Her reception of the Nonconformist deputation which congratulated her on her accession was chill, to use the mildest word.[2] And it was with the Queen's knowledge and approbation that a deliberate attack upon Nonconformity was made by the introduction into the House of Commons (December 1702) of the Occasional Conformity Bill, of which so much was to be heard through the immediately ensuing years and which was finally to pass, though in somewhat modified form, in 1711. "Occasional Conformity" meant the occasional reception of the Lord's Supper by Nonconformists according to the Church of England rites. The question whether any recognition of the Church and her ordinances—and if any, how much—was permissible to a Nonconformist was no new one among the Nonconformists themselves. So far as attendance at Church of England services is concerned, it had come up in the early days of Henry Jacob's Church at Southwark;[3] while in respect of participation in the Communion, some of the ejected Presbyterian ministers had even

[1] Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*, vi. 2, 145.
[2] Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs*, v. 153.
[3] See Vol. I. p. 195 note.

in the fateful 1662 determined that they would not be debarred from now and then taking the Sacrament with the very Church which cast them out.[1] But the Test Act, following upon the Corporation Act, had made the matter assume a different aspect. A Nonconformist might attend the Sacramental service at his parish Church just previous to an election for some municipal office, so qualifying himself for holding the post if it were on him the electors' choice should fall; and, once elected, he might never present himself again till his term expired. This, as a matter of fact, was what not a few Nonconformists did, though it should be said that the Baptists at least resolutely set their faces against the practice, affirming and reaffirming time and time again that under no circumstances, whether or no any question of holding office were involved, could one of their members lawfully commune with the Established Church.[2] Of course the Baptist rule was too stringent, and artificially made a sin where no real sin existed. But though this is true, it is equally true that laxity of conscience was implied in "occasional conformity" practised for office' sake. A course of action which is not essentially wrong may become wrong by reason of the motive which induces it; and to take the Sacrament in the Established Church in order to qualify for a civil post was undoubtedly an attempt to play fast and loose with Nonconformist principle, and to preserve the Nonconformist name without incurring its disabilities and its shames. Nevertheless the thing was done. Not the strict Baptist example, not such denunciations as that which Defoe launched at Sir Thomas Abney[3]—who in 1701 qualified for the office of Lord Mayor of London in the indicated way—and not the compelling grasp of principle, prevented a practice which presented Churchmen with a ready excuse for a renewed declaration of war.

It was on November 14, 1702, that the Occasional Con-

[1] Howe, *Some Consideration . . . concerning the occasional Conformity of Dissenters*, p. 33; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), i. 249, 250.

[2] Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, p. 487, quoting from the "Declaration" issued by the Baptist Conference of 1689 (*supra*, p. 132); Ivimey, *History of English Baptists*, iii. 228-233.

[3] See Calamy, *An Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History*, i. 576-582.

formity Bill made its first appearance in the Commons; and so hot was the zeal of the Lower House that by the 28th it had run through all its stages and was ready for the Lords.[1] Its stringent provisions imposed a fine of one hundred pounds upon any one who, holding an office for which partaking of the Church of England rite was a qualification, should during his tenure of it attend a conventicle-meeting of five persons: over and above this, he was to forfeit five pounds for every subsequent day on which he performed the duties of his post; and the reins were drawn still tighter by clauses which made it impossible for him to be reappointed till he had conformed for a twelvemonth, and by others which visited with double penalties a renewal of the offence after reappointment had been secured.[2] That the real aim of the Bill was the suppression of Nonconformity is shown by the fact that an instruction to Committee permitting Nonconformists to decline any office which involved conformity was defeated on the second reading.[3] The Commons, at any rate, knew their own minds. But the Lords inserted—and, spite of a Conference between the two Houses, insisted upon—amendments which resulted in the wrecking of the scheme,[4] even the majority of the Bishops, with Tenison of Canterbury at their head,[5] declining to play the Commons' game. Men like Burnet, in fact, were not only aghast at this new outbreak of the old intolerance, but deliberately defended occasional conformity as being in many circumstances a proper and righteous course for the Dissenters to adopt.[6] For the moment, hostility was checked. But the tide of feeling in the country was running strong and high. The announcement of William's death had been sufficient to make reactionary feeling show itself in the

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 49 ff.; Stanhope, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 78 ff.

[2] Burnet and Stanhope as previous note.

[3] *Journals of the House of Commons*, xiv. 36.

[4] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 53; Stanhope, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, p. 81.

[5] Sancroft, having refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, had been superseded by Tillotson in 1690. But Tillotson died after two and a half years, Tenison being his successor. See D'Oyly, *Life of Sancroft*, i. 447; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iv. 130, 131, 237.

[6] *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 107 note.

wrecking or attempted wrecking of Nonconformist places of worship at Newcastle-under-Lyme and elsewhere ;[1] and there were not wanting those who were ready and able to play upon an instrument like this. Sir Henry Mackworth declared that Dissenters should be excluded from any and every sort of political office.[2] There were some among the clergy who, if Sacheverell had not been a competitor and an easy first, would have taken the prize for vigour of vituperation in any court. Milborne, for example, preaching at St. Ethelburga, London, poured out the vials of his wrath on the Dissenters' heads ; and on the anniversary of the execution of Charles the First declared that the posterity of the murderers "ought at least to be kept under for the sins of their fathers," and turned over and over with ferocious glee the text, "Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers ; that they do not rise nor possess the land."[3] But Sacheverell's name stands out as that of the man who gave himself up to inflaming the passion of the crowd, and to making the echoes of the "Church in danger" cry reverberate over the length and breadth of the land. From 1702 onwards he poured upon the heads of the Dissenters a stream of vitriolic abuse, as also a stream hardly less vitriolic upon the heads of those Churchmen who extended anything like decent treatment to the hated folk. To him Nonconformists were simply vermin to be caught and exterminated as speedily as might be. To give any latitude to Dissenters, he declared, was to set up "a universal trade of cozenage, sharping, dissimulation, and downright knavery."[4] That he was, notwithstanding his scurrility, a man whom the masses of the people at this time delighted to honour and on whose lips they were glad to hang, was unmistakably proved when Sacheverell was impeached in 1710 for declaring that the

[1] Calamy, *My Own Life*, i. 460 note ; Calamy, *Abridgment of Mr. Baxter's History*, i. 620, 621.

[2] See specially the preface to *Peace at Home*. "Nor is their possession of them consistent with the peace and safety of the established Government."

[3] *A Sermon preached at the Parish Church of St. Ethelburga, on Friday, Jan. 30th, 1708.* Those who care to see some vigorous counter-attacks against the High Church party can refer to Bisset in *The Modern Phanatick*, etc.

[4] *Perils of False Brethren*, p. 21. It was in reply to Sacheverell that Defoe wrote his famous satire, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters.*

Revolution was an unlawful act.[1] The impeachment—an unwise measure, as it turned out, and one which increased instead of diminishing Sacheverell's importance in the popular esteem—was Godolphin's work. Though Anne had at the outset of her reign dismissed not a few of William's ministers and put Tories in their place, the interplay of political forces which need not here be examined had made it impossible as yet to achieve a complete or permanent transfer of power; and the Whig Godolphin was not likely to let Sacheverell's reference to the Revolution pass, particularly since the sermon also contained a sneer at Godolphin himself.[2] But Godolphin must have sorely regretted that he had not left Sacheverell alone. The trial brought frantically cheering crowds round the prisoner's coach: the wrecking of Nonconformist meeting-houses and of the houses of those known to sympathise with Nonconformists broke out again: fashion jostled against fustian in the effort to get a glimpse of the hero of the day; even the Haymarket Opera was deserted by many for the superior attractions the trial held out;[3] and although a conviction was secured, the sentence was merely one of suspension for three years, coupled with an order that the peccant sermon —together with an earlier one of kindred tenour—should be burnt at the Exchange.[4] The whole incident made it quite clear that reaction had reached effervescing point with the people at large. Among the rank and file of the clergy anti-Nonconformist sentiment was waxing fiercer; and there were plenty of crusaders—as bitter as Sacheverell himself, if more respectable in language and method—to fight the Church's battle against her foes with voice and pen. So keenly alert were many of the ministers of the Church that the Lower House of Convocation even opposed the union

[1] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 424; Stanhope, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 404 ff.; Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs*, vi. 508.

[2] Burnet, as previous note, v. 429 note; Stanhope, as previous note, p. 406; Luttrell, as previous note, vi. 523 ff. Godolphin was alluded to under the name of Ben Jonson's scoundrel Volpone.

[3] *Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber* (ed. Lowe), ii. 91.

[4] See *A Compleat History of the whole Proceedings of the Parliament of Great Britain against Dr. Henry Sacheverell*; Stanhope, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 412-416; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 426-436.

between England and Scotland—accomplished in 1707—because, so the argument ran, the Presbyterianism of the one kingdom might weaken the Episcopacy of the other.[1] All these things were signs—and the signs might be taken as sealed by the return of a large Tory majority at the elections of 1710—that the Occasional Conformity Act, were it now revived, would have a far better chance of success than on any previous occasion when it had made its bow. For there had been other abortive attempts to pass it besides that attempt of 1702 at which we have already glanced. In each of the two following years the raising of its flag had been hailed with acclaim in the Commons; but the Lords had forced it to the ground again.[2] Thereafter, for a while, the matter slumbered. But 1711 saw the Bill pass into law. In addition to the eager backing of clerical and popular opinion there was the further advantage that many of the Whigs who had opposed it before were now disposed to please the Tories by supporting it, if the Tories on their side would consent to favour continued prosecution of the war with France. Under the new conditions the passage of the Bill through its various stages became as it were a mere glissade down an easy slope instead of the difficult ascent it had previously been; and the whole run through Commons and Lords—or rather through Lords and Commons, for this time it was in the Upper House the measure made its start—was performed in a week.[3] Although the Act was not quite so stringent as it had been at its first appearance nine years before, it was oppressive enough. All persons in place of trust or profit under the Crown, and all "the common-council men in corporations" who should attend any meeting of more than ten (excluding members of the family if the meeting took place in a private house) at which the Prayer Book was not used, or at which the Queen and the Princess Sophia were not prayed for, should lose their posts and pay a forty-pound fine; also they were to

[1] Lathbury, *History of Convocation* (2nd ed.), p. 402; Stanhope, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, p. 275.

[2] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 105, 176; Stanhope, *History of the Reign of Queen Anne*, pp. 110, 168.

[3] Burnet, as previous note, vi. 77-79; Stanhope, as previous note, pp. 502, 503.

be incapable of holding office until they made oath that they had not attended any conventicle for a twelvemonth past.[1] So the new attack upon Nonconformity drew its sword. An attack, and an attack designed to be pushed home, it indisputably was. Whatever one may think of the habit of "occasional conformity" as some Nonconformists had practised it, it is quite clear that the Occasional Conformity Act did but seize upon the point as a protest to cover ulterior designs, and was intended to push the Nonconformists up against the hard choice between abandoning their Nonconformity or abandoning all hope of serving society and the State—under the stress of which dilemma it was hoped that for the abandonment of their Nonconformity the die would be cast. It was, in short, an indirect way of endeavouring to repeal the Toleration Act of 1689. Behind it was the old ecclesiastical intolerance which had inspired the series of persecuting Acts from 1662 onwards, the old belief—or the old desire to believe—that to be a Nonconformist in religion was to be a traitor to the State, and the old haughty assumption that Dissent was something common and unclean. And as compared with the measure of Charles the Second's time, it did but substitute sieging for a massacre, a steady and relentless pressure for a single destructive stroke.

But the enemies of Nonconformity were not content. From their own point of view they were wise in supposing that the most effectual way to eradicate Dissent was to prevent the teaching of its principles; for thus the stream would be stopped at its source. Mention has already been made of the dislike with which Nonconformist "Academies" and seminaries were regarded by the bigoted party in the Established Church, and of the attempts made to vex them even in William's reign. Fuel had been thrown upon the flame of dislike by Sacheverell, who had diverted a little of his vitriolic eloquence from Nonconformity in general to these Nonconformist institutions in particular and to the "hellish principles" taught therein[2] "to corrupt and debauch the youth of the nation"; as also by Samuel Wesley—father of the great Wesley and son of a clergyman counted among

[1] Burnet and Stanhope, as previous note.
[2] *Perils of False Brethren*, p. 15.

the ejected of 1662—who had anticipated Sacheverell by an attack on the "Academies" in 1703.[1] At various other points—for instance, in an address from the Lower House of Convocation, and in the course of the debates on the Occasional Conformity Bill—the subject had emerged.[2] The seed fell upon good ground. In May 1714 the "Schism Bill" went through Parliament, not without strong opposition from the more enlightened Commoners and Peers,[3] but nevertheless without encountering any really critical moments or any serious risk of failure in either House. The chief part in framing the Bill was taken by Bolingbroke who, himself antagonistic to all varieties of religion alike, held that there must nevertheless be a national religion "to make government effectual" and that "all other religions or sects must be kept too low to become the rivals of it."[4] Under this Bill, no one could keep a private school or seminary unless he signed a declaration of conformity to the liturgy of the Church of England and obtained a Bishop's licence to teach—this needed licence not being obtainable except after production of a certificate stating that the applicant had communicated according to Church of England rites within the preceding year. For teaching without this licence three months' imprisonment was awarded; and if after obtaining it the holder should be present at any Nonconformist service, he was similarly to suffer, and to forfeit his licence without any possibility of ever having it restored. The only concessions obtainable by the utmost insistence of the Nonconformists' friends were these—that in the case of tutors employed in noblemen's families the Bishop's licence might be dispensed with, though the other requirements held good, and that any one who taught

[1] *A Letter from a Country Divine to his Friend in London, concerning the Education of the Dissenters in their Private Academies.*

[2] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 369.

[3] It is interesting to find among the reasons given by some of the Lords for signing a protest against the Act, the same one with which Lord Shaftesbury had recommended toleration of Dissenters to Charles the Second (*supra*, p. 63): "We may justly fear they may be driven by this Bill from England, to the great prejudice of our manufactures, for as we gained them by the persecution abroad, so we may lose them by the like proceedings at home."—Boyer, *An Impartial History of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Bills*, p. 113.

[4] *Essay Concerning Authority in Matters of Religion*, section 41 (*Works*, ed. Philadelphia, 1841, iv. 108).

reading, writing, and arithmetic, or any part of mathematics so far as it related to navigation or any mechanical art, should be outside the Act.[1] It will be seen that these exempting clauses counted for little, and that the Act, had it become operative, would have secured the extinction of Nonconformity by preventing Nonconformists from exerting any direct influence upon plastic and growing minds. Even on the secular side the matter was serious; for other denominations had followed the example of the Quakers;[2] and Nonconformists had established numerous schools—which gave education to the poor, and to those of all creeds—in many country towns.[3] At least one statement was made in Parliament to the effect that schooling was passing into the Dissenters' hands.[4] A Nonconformist schoolmaster would have become an impossibility under the Act, so that into places of secular education no trace of a Nonconformist "atmosphere" could ever have penetrated. But the more important matter was that the Academies through whose work the perpetuation of an educated Nonconformist ministry was ensured would have been compelled to close. It was perhaps as shrewd a blow as the enemies of Nonconformity could have essayed. As it happened, however, the rejoicings of those who passed and those who approved of the measure endured for but a brief space. The Bill received the royal assent on the 26th of June, and was to come into force on August 1st. But on that very morning the Queen passed away: under the new Government, and after the change which at George's accession immediately came over the aspect of affairs, no effort at enforcing it was made; and thus the Act stood for no more than a reminder to Nonconformity of how great was the danger it had escaped. "On a sudden the Lord has dissipated our fears," said Samuel Clark, a Nonconformist preacher of St. Albans. "They are all vanished away. We are surprised into a secure settlement, a state of unshaken tranquillity. . . . He has in

[1] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), i. 118-120; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 503-505; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), i. 280, 281.

[2] *Supra*, p. 87.

[3] For instances, see Milner, *Life of Watts*, p. 430.

[4] By Lord Cowper. Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, vi. 1351.

the instant broken all the measures of the enemies of our religion and liberties."[1] But for such a reminder, at least, it stood. Nonconformists would realise, as they recited its provisions in thankful and tranquil certainty that the sting of them was drawn, how the advancing tides of disaster had been stopped only just in time. Graven upon their memories would be the fact that 1714 had all but taken away what 1689 had given—that they had been pushed rudely up again to the prison whence they had emerged with songs and thanksgiving twenty-five years before—and that something not far short of a miracle had enabled them to turn again just on the hither side of the door.

The principal facts in the strictly external history of Nonconformity, properly so called, during the two reigns following upon the Revolution of 1688, may be taken as given in the above recital. Before passing on to some consideration of Nonconformity's inner spirit, there are one or two other matters connected with the general situation in its external aspects on which a few words must be said. The Non-Jurors may come first. Only in a quite superficial sense can these men be termed Nonconformists; but they took up a position outside the Church of England (claiming nevertheless that it was in them the true Church of England was embodied); and thus, at least superficially, Nonconformists they became. As their name implies, they were clergymen who refused to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary. They numbered seven Bishops in their ranks, with Archbishop Sancroft at their head—the strange spectacle being thus presented of a prelate who had gone to the Tower because he opposed James losing his see because he opposed James's successor.[2] It is somewhat difficult to realise the non-juring position; but it may be briefly said that the Non-Jurors held that doctrine of "Divine right" which was so dear to James himself, with the corollary that even after all his misdeeds James still remained the *de jure* King;

[1] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 167.

[2] The other six were Turner of Ely, Lloyd of Norwich, White of Peterborough, Ken of Bath and Wells, Frampton of Gloucester, and Lake of Chichester. Thomas of Worcester, who would have ranked himself with them, died before the day on which the oath had to be taken or refused. Turner, White, Ken, and Lake had, like Sancroft, gone to the Tower in 1688 (*supra*, p. 112).

so that while William might exercise some sort of regency, and as *de facto* ruler hold a recognisable position in that sense, he could not claim that the actual allegiance due to the Sovereign should be transferred from James to himself. The absolute conscientiousness of most of the Non-Jurors must be admitted, and they are entitled to the reverence due to all who gladly suffer when conscience calls ; but one may be permitted a feeling of regret that so much resolution should have been wasted on what was far less a matter of substance than of form. Wasted—or, at any rate, spent—upon the matter of form, however, it was. About four hundred of the clergy followed Sancroft's lead ; and the new body so constituted began an existence which was never anything more than a drawn-out dying from its first day. A few of the Non-Jurors bore names still remembered with special honour—not because those who bore them were Non-Jurors, but because they rendered services to the world with which their non-juring opinions had no relation or concern. The hymns of the saintly Ken are among the treasures of the universal Church ; and Collier's *Ecclesiastical History*—frequently referred to in the earlier portion of this book—ranks among the historical student's most valuable helps. But as a Church the body has no history at all, except indeed a history of rather petty squabbles among its own members, worthy of no record here. It had no buildings and no services other than services of a quite private kind : it could not under the circumstances hope for any future, notwithstanding Sancroft's determination, strenuously opposed by Ken, to perpetuate a non-juring hierarchy which should in its turn keep a non-juring clergy alive ;[1] and although we find that the last non-juring Bishop passed

[1] Sancroft, who became exceedingly bitter, sent Dr. Hickes to James at St. Germains in 1694, with a request that James should nominate two suffragans, one for Thetford and one for Ipswich. Hickes himself was nominated for the first place, Wagstaffe for the second (Overton, *History of the Non-Jurors*, pp. 84 ff.; Lathbury, *History of the Non-Jurors*, pp. 98, 99). By its very nature and circumstances, the non-juring party would seem to James a possible instrument to be used in his plans for recovering his throne ; and though there is no suspicion of treason against the majority, some few fell into the snare. Hickes and Wagstaffe were probably engaged in working on James's behalf. See D'Oyly, *Life of Sancroft*, ii. 33, 34 ; also Macpherson, *Original Letters from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover*, i. 452-455.

away so late as 1805, and that the last non-juring clergyman waved his flag—as if from a rock whence the relentless seas had swept all but him away—even after the last non-juring Bishop had gone, the sect was to all intents and purposes still-born.[1] And these few facts—though we may take a casual glance, and no more, at the non-jurors once or twice again—are practically all that the reader need concern himself to note.

The other point in the general situation to which brief mention must be given is the spread of Socinian—or as, with some sacrifice of accuracy, they may for convenience' sake be called, Unitarian—views. We have had no occasion to notice them since we saw John Biddle released from prison, to die in 1662;[2] but though at the time of the Revolution no Unitarian body and no Unitarian Churches were in existence (and it will be remembered that under the Toleration Act Unitarians were expressly excluded from relief) Unitarian opinions were strengthening their hold, and the way was being prepared for that Unitarian denomination which was to come into existence before very long. Under Biddle's influence Firmin, a wealthy merchant in London, had adopted Unitarian ideas; and when shortly after William's accession a series of Unitarian tracts was published, it was supposed that Firmin defrayed the cost.[3] But although this direct advocacy of Unitarian doctrines was going on, it was more within the regular religious bodies than outside them, and (for the moment) more among Churchmen than among Nonconformists, that the Unitarian leaven was at work. In at least one Nonconformist quarter, however, strong suspicion had been aroused. Matthew Caffin, General Baptist minister at Horsham, had, as the historian puts it, begun "to puzzle himself with endeavouring to explain inexplicables";[4] and a long controversy as to his orthodoxy or non-orthodoxy ensued. It is probable that in the course

[1] On the Non-Jurors, see Lathbury's *History of the Non-Jurors*; Overton's *History of the Non-Jurors*; Macaulay, *History of England* (ed. 1858), iii. 453-464; iv. 42, 43; Hallam, *Constitutional History* (ed. 1854), iii. 108.

[2] *Supra*, p. 45.

[3] Wallace, *Anti-Trinitarian Biography*, i. 235; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iv. 378; Bonet-Maury, *Early Sources of English Unitarian Christianity*, pp. 206, 207.

[4] Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, i. 464.

of dispute Caffin was led from one statement to another, not really seeing whither he was being led, and finally landed at a goal which he would have been shocked to contemplate as possible at first.[1] But it was within the Establishment that the movement was most marked. In some quarters members of the "Latitudinarian" school of which mention has previously been made[2] had passed over the line and embraced opinions at variance with orthodox Trinitarianism. Dr. Bury lost his post as Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford, for a book which rendered him suspect;[3] and Dr. Wallace explained the doctrine of the Trinity so thoroughly—employing the curious idea of a cube with its length, breadth, and height infinitely extended, in order to illustrate the nature of God—that he was not unnaturally supposed to have explained it all away.[4] This was not without its humorous side; but confusion grew worse confounded when Sherlock came forward as the champion of orthodoxy, only to be at once told—particularly by South, who could not miss so golden an opportunity of exercising his favourite talent for abuse—that his Trinitarianism was in reality tritheism, and that he was as bad as those whom he assailed.[5] The avowed Unitarians looked on with interest, not to say with amusement, while the orthodox voices wrangled;[6] the scandal becoming at length so marked that the Government felt bound to interfere. In December of 1693, and again in January 1694, the Lords commanded a pamphlet containing an attack upon the doctrine of the Trinity to be burnt, on the second occasion ordering the prosecution of its author and printer:[7] in February 1696 the King issued injunctions against the preaching of any doctrine on the controverted subject except that which was conformable to the Articles and the creeds, adding that public controversies

[1] See Taylor, as previous note, i. 464 ff.

[2] *Supra*, p. 28.

[3] *The Naked Gospel.* See Wallace's *Anti-Trinitarian Biography*, i. 200-203.

[4] See Wallace, as previous note, i. 207 ff. The book is termed *The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity briefly explained.*

[5] Sherlock's book is *Vindication of the Trinity and Incarnation* (Wallace, as cited, i. 217, 237 ff.); Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iv. 381.

[6] Wallace, as cited, i. 237.

[7] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xv. 317, 332.

among the clergy must not take place;[1] and in 1698 a new Parliamentary Act—which was happily never enforced—made denial of Trinitarian doctrine a punishable offence.[2] One has to add with regret that some of the Nonconformists about this time presented an address to the King asking that the printing of Socinian publications should be stopped.[3] But the new views had gathered too much momentum to be thus checked. It is reported that by the close of the century or early in the next Unitarian meeting-houses were built in London.[4] However that may be, it is certain that during the reign of Anne the controversy was still hot. In 1706 the Lower House of Convocation complained—though without obtaining satisfaction—that a Unitarian was preaching every week in the capital, renewing the complaint in respect of Thomas Emlyn in 1711;[5] and in the following year the agitation broke out again within the borders of the Established Church when Samuel Clarke, Rector of St. James's, Piccadilly, published *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, a book which leant towards the Unitarian side. Against Clarke, as against Emlyn, the Lower House of Convocation was the complainant; but Clarke's explanation was held satisfactory by his ecclesiastical superiors, so that he remained undisturbed in his place.[6] With these facts set down, we may for the time being intermit our consideration of the Unitarian tendency, bearing in mind that we shall shortly come upon its track again, and that what we have noted does but prophesy the more definitely consolidated and more definitely organised Unitarianism whose birthday lay not many years ahead.

We turn now to see how positive and definite hold upon Nonconformist principle (always meaning by this the principle that life comes before organisation, that the making of a Church can only rightfully proceed from and by the manifestation of inward spiritualities, that all the external arrange-

[1] Wilkins's *Concilia*, iv. 625, 626; Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), iv. 382.

[2] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), i. 358; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 167.

[3] Wallace, *Anti-Trinitarian Biography*, i. 384, 385.

[4] Leslie, *The Socinian Controversy discussed*, preface.

[5] Lathbury, *History of Convocation* (2nd ed.), p. 401; Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, iii. 409.

[6] Abbey and Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 509.

ments of Church order and discipline and creed must be the spontaneously-produced and correspondent issue of vital processes within) had died down among those who should have been vigilant guardians of the tradition handed down from Nonconformity's early days, and how this lack of positiveness contributed to religious decline. It is, in fact, on a somewhat larger scale than the one implied in this statement that the situation requires to be visioned if it is to be rightly understood. For it was not only the descendants of the original Nonconformist stock—those who, nominally at any rate, based themselves upon the full Nonconformist idea—who had come to survey things with clouded eyes. Those who had become Nonconformist by compulsion rather than by choice were also (indeed inevitably, precisely because it *was* by compulsion that they stood on the Nonconformist side) in an equivocal position, and one in which their sight of their own fundamental principles grew blurred. We noted in the previous section,[1] as to Presbyterians and Congregationalists, how the first were driven into a quasi-Congregational position against which they chafed—and how the second, besides being exposed to other influences blunting their sense of their own essential ideal, had that sense still further blunted by the association with Presbyterianism which circumstances brought about. In effect, therefore, Nonconformists of both these sections (of the other sections separate mention will be made) were so to say sailing with unshipped rudder and, so far as their Church ideals were concerned, losing their bearings both as to starting-point and goal, as they drifted or swirled round upon the stream. It is no matter for surprise that from this indefiniteness of self-understanding harmful consequences should descend upon religion in respect either of doctrine or of zeal, perhaps indeed in respect of both.

One instance of lax grasp upon a positive Church-idea (for that matter, it was an example of religious lukewarmness as well) we have already seen in the attendance at the Church of England Communion Service, made by some Nonconformists in order to qualify for municipal office before the passage of the Occasional Conformity Act.[2]

[1] *Supra*, pp. 128-131.

[2] *Supra*, p. 146.

Another is provided in the "Heads of Agreement" arranged between the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers of London in 1690, two years after the Toleration Act went through. This can scarcely be called an attempt at an actual union of the two denominations, since the arrangement was between the ministers alone; but it was undoubtedly intended as a first step to that end. Informal co-operation between the two denominations had already gone far, and was now to be shaped in fresh moulds. It has been noted that in various seminaries both Presbyterian and Congregational students were trained;[1] and in establishing a charity which out of landed property was to provide for poor preachers and ministerial students Lady Hewley, an eminent Presbyterian lady, blotted all denominational limits out.[2] But co-operation was now to grow to or be changed into something more. The idea of sinking all differences and breaking down all barriers between Presbyterianism and Independency, and of sheltering both within one encircling denominational wall, looks superficially plausible, not to say praiseworthy; but it must be remembered that Presbyterianism and Independency could not thus forgather unless each of them sacrificed something fundamental to its very nature. According to the "Heads of Agreement," real personal religion was to be an essential pre-requisite for membership in a congregation, each particular "society of visible saints" was to be recognised as a Church, every Church was to have its right of self-government admitted, pastors and elders were to govern while the general body of the members was only to "consent," the co-operation and sanction of neighbouring Churches were to be sought after in matters connected with the calling and ordination of ministers, and occasional synods of ministers only should be held whose pronouncements should be treated with "reverential regard," even though not looked upon as possessing binding force.[3] One has only to look down the list of

[1] *Supra*, p. 87.

[2] Joshua Wilson, *Historical Enquiry concerning the Principles, Opinions, and Usages of the English Presbyterians*, pp. 250, 251.

[3] *The Heads of Agreement* appeared in 1691. See also Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 474-479; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), i. 382-386 note.

points to see that in agreeing to them both Presbyterians and Congregationalists abandoned their original and distinctive ground. Provisions for the co-operation of other Churches in ministerial calls and for the summoning of synods which, while not actually possessing authority, were to be treated as though they did, indicate that an actual Presbyterian system was at the same time surrendered and yet longed for. The provisions which recognised each separate congregation as a valid Church and insisted on personal religion as the primary formative condition favoured the Congregational idea. But precisely because both Presbyterianism and Congregationalism each contributed something to the scheme, the scheme itself was neither; though it may be admitted that, in so far as mere bulk and amount are concerned, the Presbyterian sacrifice was the larger of the two.[1] What the incident shows is that over neither of the participating bodies did essential principle exercise any captivating or magnetic force. The Presbyterians could never have entered into the partnership had they really believed in the divine origin of the Presbyterian discipline and system: the Congregationalists could never have entered into it had they grasped the Congregational ideal as in these pages it has been repeatedly set forth—the ideal of a Church as a veritable body of men and women through whom, in response to their self-surrender, Christ lives and speaks and acts; while at the same time the Presbyterians had not become Congregationalists nor the Congregationalists Presbyterians, since both kept hold of what elements of their respective organisations and methods they could. And the scheme, so far as the Congregationalists were concerned, was much more an explanation of the "democratic" Church-idea which had now crept in, and of the limits within which it was to be worked, than a re-assertion of the old conception on which Congregationalism had been based. The bewilderment of the two denominations is perhaps what the transaction most clearly reveals.

It may be stated at once that the union, or partial union, did not endure for long. It had not had time to

[1] On this, see Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 461-463.

spread from London over the country as a whole—although in certain places the example of the capital was followed with alacrity[1] — before shocks and jars dislocated the arrangement in London itself. The "United Brethren" of London quarrelled first of all, and as early as 1691, over the case of Mr. Davis of Rothwell in Northamptonshire, and then over a volume of sermons by a Dr. Tobias Crisp, who had himself been dead for more than fifty years, but whose son republished the father's discourses with a prefatory note signed by John Howe and other eminent men. The controversy is far too long and complicated to be chronicled here;[2] but it appeared, as it ran its course, that the Congregationalists were — rather curiously — much more highly Calvinistic than the Presbyterians; while in the charge of Socinianism made against Dr. Williams, one of the Presbyterian disputants, we come upon a suggestion of advancing Unitarianism in the Presbyterian body which, whether justified or not in this particular case, was to be fully justified soon. Perhaps the comparative looseness with which some of the Presbyterian ministers seemed to hold the Calvinistic doctrines upon which Presbyterianism was professedly based may be not quite out of connection with the equivocal relation they had borne to their fundamental Church principles ever since the ejection of 1662; for it is easy to believe that surrender of what has hitherto been considered vital in one department may soon—when nothing is put in the lost fundamental's place—be followed by surrender of what has hitherto been considered vital in another; so that, in this case, there would be a connecting thread running from Presbyterianism's forsaking of Presbyterian ecclesiastical essentials, through Presbyterianism's lowered Calvinism, right on to the Socinianism into which Presbyterianism lapsed ere long. (That Congregationalism

[1] See Preface to Flavell's *Remains*, one of the sermons in which book was to have been preached to a united body of the kind, had not death prevented; *ibid.* pp. 104, 105; *Diary of Ralph Thoresby*, i. 210; Hunter, *Rise of the Old Dissent*, pp. 373-376; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 294, 295.

[2] Consult for particulars, Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 295-299; Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891* (ed. 1891) pp. 139-145; Calamy, *My Own Life*, i. 321-324, 394-397, 409, 410; Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 469-475.

had also drifted into an equivocal relation with its own fundamental idea has been admitted; but the drift was not so far, and accordingly entailed consequences less severe.) But however that may be, the fact of dispute between the recently linked denominations is clear enough. It was seven years (1698) before even a temporary patching up was achieved; and we shall see that the quarrel was patched up only to break out again. A temporary mending of the rent was, however, accomplished—though the Presbyterians withdrew in 1694[1] from the Pinners' Hall Lectureship which we saw them establishing in conjunction with the independents in 1672[2]—and for the time being peace, or a semblance of it, returned. In reality, the safety-valve had been locked down, a future explosion being thus substituted for a present escape of steam, and that was all. But—to come back to the platform from which we started—the attempted union, quite apart from the controversies which so speedily supervened, shows in the very terms and conditions which ruled it that both parties to it were eccentric to what had been their pivotal idea, and especially that with the Congregationalists, who should have been chief among the upholders of the essential Nonconformist ideal, the vision of that ideal was growing dim.

It is worth while in this connection to take a glance at what may be called Congregationalism in a transition stage, as represented in the message sent by Isaac Watts to the Mark Lane Independent Church, when it called him to its pulpit in 1702. Watts had Congregationalism so to say in his blood; for his father was in jail for it when he was born in 1674, and his mother nursed him upon the prison steps;[3] so that the son was from the first too much overshadowed by the Congregational idea to travel as far from it as some were going. Yet, in giving some account of his views to the Mark Lane congregation, although he uses the old language as to every society of saints being a true Church, admits that a Church is not bound to submit itself blindly to its pastor's

[1] Calamy, *My Own Life*, i. 351; Calamy, *Abridgment of Baxter's Life* (ed. 1713), i. 537; Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, ii. 4, 201.

[2] *Supra*, p. 78.

[3] Milner's *Life of Watts*, p. 35; Rogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 380.

government, and admits also that in *some* matters a pastor ought to do nothing without the people's consent, he nevertheless declares that in the absence of a pastor a Church is "incomplete" and without "power in itself to administer all ordinances among them": there are various hints that the minister is something more than the *primus inter pares* which true Congregationalism holds him; and the whole trend of the propositions Watts lays down, even though the movement be slight and slow, is towards the compromise between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism which in the "Heads of Agreement" had been more emphatically made.[1] If one were unaware that such a tendency was at work upon the wider stage, Watts's words and clauses might pass unsuspected by, buried as they are among words and clauses of other tenor; but when one knows, then one discerns, in phrases slipped in here and there, how that tendency was claiming occasional visiting rights where it could not as yet hope to be made perfectly at home. And if Watts, for whom Congregational air had been mingled with the earliest breaths he drew, and for whom there was in heredity's cord so marked a Congregational strand—if Watts could go so far, one may conjecture how much further and how much more easily Congregationalists of less high and strenuous ancestry would be led away.

Side by side with, in part probably in consequence of, this lack of positiveness in holding to a definite principle of Church life—the Conformist principle in the case of the Presbyterians, the Nonconformist principle in the case of the Congregationalists—lukewarmness in religious experience and religious aspiration began. It is true that evidence for such lukewarmness, covering the period up to Anne's death, is but scanty; and it is only when later on towards the middle of the century we find, as we shall find, how by the confession of Nonconformist leaders themselves Nonconformist religion had declined,[2] that we realise how much further back than the time of these complaints the downward movement must have begun in order to have got so far. On

[1] Milner, as cited, pp. 181-187; Bogue and Bennett, as previous note, ii. 380; Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 15-19.

[2] *Infra*, pp. 197-200. See on this Milner, *Life of Watts*, pp. 202 ff.

the other hand, the inference from these later complaints to an earlier beginning of the religious decay does force itself irresistibly on the mind. And once we have got to this point of view, we begin to see what is implied in Burnet's statement, made soon after the Toleration Act was passed, that the Dissenters' religion had lost the strictness it used to possess.[1] Burnet, although a Churchman, looked upon Nonconformity with a friendly eye, and was always more disposed to praise than to blame; so that not without warrant, and serious warrant we may be sure, would his criticism be made. It was not, however, during William's reign that declension reached any swiftness of pace. When we come to the time of Anne, we are in a different atmosphere; and that chill which was to pierce more and more bitingly into the religion both of Church and Nonconformity until the Evangelical Revival brought renewal of heat had well set in. Perhaps the passing of the men who had been great in leadership of both the Independent and Presbyterian ranks had something to do with it; for the presence of these with their fervour and passion would, so long as it continued, obviate or diminish the religiously harmful consequences which compromise on the matter of Church ideals must naturally entail. We have noted before how many of the early Independent protagonists had passed away;[2] and though there were men of mark among their successors, the earliest level was scarcely reached again.[3] The first line of Presbyterian champions stretched on to later dates; but Baxter went in 1691, Philip Henry in 1696, Vincent in 1699, Bates in 1702, and Howe in 1705.[4] It is not surprising that when prophetic fires such as these were quenched, those kindled in their stead should burn with both paler and less contagious flame. At any rate, religious decline began.

[1] *Pastoral Care* (ed. 1818), p. 172. "They have in a great measure lost the good character that once they had," are Burnet's words—suggesting that it was an opportunity for the Church to lose her *bad* one, and thus influence Dissenters more powerfully.

[2] *Supra*, p. 105. See also Waddington, *Congregational History*, ii. 678 ff.

[3] See on this Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 513, 514.

[4] Calamy, *Abridgment of Baxter's Life* (ed. 1713), i. 403; Luttrell, *Brief Historical Relation of State Affairs*, ii. 311; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 307-313; Rogers's *Life of Howe* (ed. 1879), p. 242.

It is significant that on the passing of the Occasional Conformity Act many Nonconformists who held public office gave up attendance at their own Churches—gave up, in fact, attendance at any Church except for that partaking of the Sacrament which the Act imposed—rather than resign their posts, some of them, like Sir Thomas Abney, maintaining private Nonconformist chaplains in their homes.[1] It may be unhesitatingly asserted that none in whom Christianity was a consuming fire could so have done. When one contrasts conduct such as this with the Nonconformist heroisms of Charles the Second's time, one sees how steep and far the fall has been. As to Nonconformist numbers, data are scant and opinions contradictory. It is estimated by some that there were more Nonconformists at the close of Anne's reign than at any time before; but on closer examination the estimate turns out to be a mere guess;[2] while as making against its validity we have to set the known fact that the children of at any rate the wealthier Nonconformists were drifting back to the Established Church,[3] and that an estimate of the number of Nonconformist Churches published in 1715 by Neal does not, even allowing for its inaccuracies, give countenance to the idea of Nonconformist growth.[4] The total number of Nonconformist congregations in England and Wales was, according to Neal's estimate, one thousand one hundred and fifty; and if we recall the rapid advance which set in immediately after the Toleration Act, this does not look as if any recent increase ever had taken place. The probabilities, in fact, point the other way. In any case, the two outstanding facts just mentioned—the abandonment of Nonconformist worship by Nonconformist office holders, and the return to the Established Church, for the sake of social advantage, of Nonconformist youth — are in themselves enough to prove a drop in Nonconformist religious zeal. On the whole, and putting all the available points of testimony together, we are safe in concluding that the religious

[1] Sir Thomas Abney was one of London's aldermen, and Watts was his chaplain (Milner's *Life of Watts*, p. 319).

[2] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), i. 354.

[3] Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, p. 509.

[4] Bogue and Bennett, as former note, i. 357, 358; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 457.

decline which was later on to become more accentuated had already well established its hold.

It is upon the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists that we have so far fixed our gaze, finding as the result of our scrutiny that lack of definiteness in apprehending their own fundamental Church ideals had led, or had helped to lead, to religious decline. If we turn to the Baptists, of them much the same thing, with certain variations and additions, may be said. Positiveness of a sort, indeed, the Baptists had in abundance; but it was positiveness in holding to the special baptismal doctrine on which their denominational separateness was grounded rather than in clinging to the Nonconformist ideal properly so called. We need do no more than recall what was said at an earlier point respecting the spirit of controversy generated by the circumstances in which they stood[1]—adding that with this spirit abroad in their midst the interests of vital religion could not but take harm, over and above the harm directly done to them by laxity in grasping the true original Church ideal, or by substituting for it one of inferior kind. Activity they did not fail to show throughout the whole period with which we are concerned: though they did not, at the passing of the Toleration Act, make in the matter of numbers so sudden a leap up the ladder as did other bodies, they moved slowly upward; and towards the close of Anne's reign they held (it is of the Calvinistic Baptists that this estimate is made) in the capital a public position "equal, if not superior, to that of the Congregationalists."[2] Subsequently to the Calvinistic Baptist Conference of 1689, previously noted,[3] other Assemblies of the same kind had met;[4] and the fact that in the Assembly of 1692 it was found necessary to provide for the future by dividing the Assembly itself into two parts, one for the east and one for the west, indicates increase both in numbers and in work. Similar gatherings of General Baptist representatives also met from time to time as the years went on.[5] But disputes continued;

[1] *Supra*, p. 133.

[2] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, p. 209.

[3] *Supra*, p. 132.

[4] Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, iii. 259, 264 ff., iv. 4 ff.

[5] Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, i. 342, 343, 457 ff.

or if old controversies were closed, new ones sprang up. The dispute as to singing was indeed ended at the Assembly of 1692 by a sort of self-denying ordinance which left every Church free to do as it would;[1] but there was still the cleavage between Calvinistic and Arminian Baptists, between those who would have thrown communion "open" and those who would have ruled it "close" or strict;[2] and such problems as whether in connection with baptism the laying on of hands was or was not an indispensable concomitant served as rallying-points for separate debating circles of their own.[3] It is hardly to be expected that vital religion could under such conditions as these be seen at its best. As a matter of fact, the resolutions passed at the Assemblies alluded to testify to considerable dissatisfaction on the part of Baptist leaders and representatives with the general religious condition of their brethren.[4] It must be admitted that lamentations of the kind are heard at representative religious gatherings whenever and wherever held, down to our own day; and some discount from the statements made is in all probability fair. But when in this case, as in that of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, we look forward to what was to be, we are driven to recognise an antecedent probability that religious decline had set in some time before: when we find that what may be called the "official" confessions of spiritual stagnation are confirmed by Baptist writers outside the official ranks,[5] the "official" confessions themselves stand as countersigned; and when we see various lines of evidence coming to the reinforcement of our first surmise as to probability, we may justifiably infer that with the Baptists, as with the other denominations already glanced at, religious declension was going on.

To the Quakers a few words must be given. These too were religiously on the down grade. In numbers they prospered like most other denominations after the passing of the Toleration Act; and the large issue of licences up to

[1] Crosby, as cited, iii. 266-271. [2] *Supra*, p. 133.

[3] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 454.

[4] See Crosby, as former reference; also Stoughton, as previous note, v. pp. 314, 315.

[5] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, p. 131.

1690[1] was the sign of a growth to be long sustained. In the matter of relief from the special disabilities of their position, also, they scored a valuable point when in 1696 an Act permitted them (though at first the relief was temporary[2]) to make in ordinary civil matters the same substitution of an affirmation for an oath which in religious matters the Toleration Act had already given them leave to make.[3] But the tide of zeal was going out, leaving bare and rather unlovely shores behind. With the Quakers, as with the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists, the vanishing of great leaders from the scene made for religious decay; for Fox died in the same year as Baxter (1691), and Robert Barclay—the man so gifted that he had been able "to challenge the theological scholarship of Europe," as has justly been claimed for him[4]—had preceded him in 1690.[5] Penn and Whitehead were living, but great as they were, they were not so great as the dead. But, at bottom, it was lack of positiveness in holding to fundamental ideals that tarnished the brilliance of the Quaker gems. It will be remembered how Fox, turning late to the question of organisation which he ought earlier to have faced, had produced controversy and disorganisation by the very efforts at organisation he made.[6] Inevitably, Quakerism came to be like a house swaying on its foundations amid winds that threatened to bring it down. The setting up of "discipline," we noted, was taken by the Story and Wilkinson dissidents to be a departure from the original Quaker belief that guidance was given to every man by the holy light within. As a consequence of this, insistence on the necessity of discipline—insistence on organisation—had to be specially stressed from the side of Fox and his supporters: the contention of the dissidents came to have an appearance of possessing an essential and intrinsic justification which it did not really possess; and in the very effort to show that organisation was in no sort of opposition to the first Quaker

[1] *Supra*, p. 140.
[2] See *infra*, p. 183.
[3] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 397, 398.
[4] Harvey, *The Rise of the Quakers*, p. 131.
[5] Sewel, as former note, ii. 358, 369.
[6] *Supra*, p. 87, 88, 133-136.

idea, the vividness of that first Quaker idea died down. It is not that the idea was denied or even questioned; but the original closeness of relation to it was impaired; and so the spiritual results it had formerly produced grew scant and thin in their flow. The Story and Wilkinson controversy became a thing of the past; but the weaknesses it produced, and the weaknesses it revealed, remained. As one modern writer among the Friends puts it, "In passing from an area of vigorous but ill-regulated life to an era of discipline, the Society had been too anxious for its standards, and too little concerned to maintain a succession of standard-bearers."[1] And he goes on, "The matter of urgency now was to re-awaken spiritual responsiveness on the part of the individual, to give the young men vision and service, to fix the thought of the Church not on itself but on its mission, so that both in the body as a whole and its several members the call of the Lord might be known and obeyed."[2] This is a true reading of the situation. What it comes to is that direct communication of the divine life from God to man through Christ—the actual superinducing of the divine life upon the life already possessed—was no longer the thing chiefly thought of or desired. And thus failed the baptisms of spiritual aspiration which had descended upon the Quakers while their faces had been turned up towards that glory: thus paled away into the darkness the flames which had played round their heads for a halo while they had stretched up so far, and thus the light which had transfigured them as they came down from the Mount was gone. Fox himself knew what was happening before he died. "I had a concern upon my spirit," he writes, "with respect to a twofold danger that attended some who professed truth: one was of young people's running into the fashions of the world; and the other was of old people's going into earthly things."[3] And later testimony harps on the same melancholy note. One of the Quaker historians tells us how a Quaker "father" who died in 1704 complained that "many days and months, yea, some years, hath my life been

[1] Braithwaite, *Spiritual Guidance in Quaker Experience*, p. 77.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 77, 78.
[3] Fox's *Journal* (ed. 1901), ii. 493.

oppressed, and my spirit grieved, to see and hear of the uneven walking of many who have a name to live and profess the knowledge of God in words." He goes on, "These things lay mightily upon me, and I may truly say, in the sight of God, I writ them in a great cross to my own will, for I delight not, nay, my soul is bowed down at the occasion of writing such things; but there is no remedy, the name of the Lord has been, and is likely to be, greatly dishonoured, if things of this nature be not stopped."[1] Of course there are always pessimists; and did this stand alone one might reckon it the complaint of a querulous old man; but the word is established in many witnesses' mouths. It must indeed he put on the other side that in maintaining a bold front against the world when choice between faithfulness to Quaker standards of conduct and betrayal of them had to be made, the Quakers were staunch and strong. For refusal to pay tithes they went to prison again and again[2]—Convocation taking special notice of them in this regard, and begging in its irritation that more satisfactory methods of recovering the tax might be devised.[3] But height of courage for these things did not necessarily or actually carry with it height of religious zeal in the strict sense, depth of piety, fine quality of unction, or that closeness and directness of contact with the eternal world and the Eternal Person which Quakerism had been specially sent to manifest among men. In respect of these, the old and rich story could no more be told.

The sum of it all is that round the whole circle of Nonconformist denominations — both those which were primarily and in the larger sense Nonconformist and that Presbyterian denomination which was Nonconformist only secondarily and by compulsion of circumstances—that round the whole circle vagueness of discernment in respect of essential Church ideals had come, and that, as a result of this, religious life was drooping low. And what this suggests for the further prospects of the great Nonconformist ideal whose

[1] Gough, *History of the Quakers*, iv. 9 ff. The old Quaker was "Ambrose Rigge of Ryegate" (Reigate).

[2] For the Quaker sufferings in the matter of tithes, see a collection of instances in Gough, *History of the Quakers*, iv. 280, 281, 289 ff.

[3] Lathbury, *History of Convocation* (2nd ed.), p. 401.

fortunes in English history we are seeking to follow is abundantly clear. The Independents, Baptists, and Quakers who, each in their several degree, were its most likely embodiments and agents, had drifted away from under its immediately-overshadowing presence: from this came tendency to lowered spiritual quality and religion of inferior rank; and lowered spiritual quality and religion of inferior rank could not but in their turn make an already dim apprehension of the Nonconformist ideal grow yet more dim. For lowered religious vitality must necessarily mean weakened power of testing, and wavering appreciation of the boundary lines between the various high territories whence the streams of religious vitality flow down. So the effect went back to give added power to its own cause; and the cycle of error moved towards actual closing up as it turned its end round upon its beginning again.

In respect of the Nonconformist ideal, indeed, perhaps the most hopeful sign at this time must be looked for quite outside the Nonconformist ranks — in those "religious societies" which have been previously referred to and claimed as standing for a protest of the Nonconformist spirit raised just when the Conformist spirit in the Established Church had made its victory complete.[1] It was during the reign of William and Mary—the Queen encouraging them in every way open to her[2]—that these societies reached their greatest strength; but even after this, though the flame of zeal may have leapt less high, it was not quenched. It may be said —although the story of the Church of England is not our direct concern in these pages—that in the Established Church, as in Nonconformity, religious declension had begun the course which was to become swifter in both so soon.[3] The reasons in the case of the Established Church were of course different; for there was certainly no vagueness of fundamental Church ideals in a body where the Conformist principle was not only so well known but so emphatically insisted on and so vociferously praised. The actual reasons

[1] *Supra*, pp. 123, 124.

[2] Burnet, *History of My Own Time* (ed. 1823), v. 18, 19.

[3] For the general condition of the Established Church, consult Overton, *Life in the English Church 1660–1714*.

need hardly be sought for here, though it may perhaps be said that in the eyes of him who adheres to the Nonconformist principle in preference to the Conformist it is hardly the Conformist principle which serves the interests of vital religion best. And indeed, since the process of decline, while going on in both the Establishment and in Nonconformity, ultimately struck lower levels in the first than in the second (except in the Presbyterians, the Nonconformist body which had been Conformist at its source) we may infer that the Nonconformist principle, even when imperfectly realised and employed, does not lose all the advantage with which it starts. On the other hand, the fact that while decline did go on in denominations accepting the Nonconformist and the Conformist ideals alike—the former following their ideal only afar off—and that in the latter class it went further with the Presbyterians, who likewise followed afar off, than with the Established Church, which followed close, indicates that either principle, as for that matter we should expect, needs to be clearly visioned and tenaciously grasped if it is to do for religion all that is in it to do. This, however, is by the way. What is to be noted is that in the religious "societies" we have a manifested aspiration after what ordinary religious experience within the Establishment did not attain, a hunger and thirst after righteousness of a loftier type than that which under the triumph of the Conformist system prevailed, and what may accordingly be read as a protest of the Nonconformist spirit against the Conformist, though, of course, as has been admitted before, a protest unconsciously made. In London and Westminster the count of them sprang from thirty-nine in the beginning of William's reign to close upon a hundred just before its close;[1] while they spread also to many other large towns in England and even across the Irish Sea.[2] We may note—though it is connected with our topic only at one remove—that these societies, themselves devotional and religious in their purpose, gave birth to other societies with directly practical aims, such as the "Society for the Reformation of Manners" and the like.[3] The business of these was to take every possible measure for

[1] Woodward, *Rise and Progress of Religious Societies*, p. 43.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 46. [3] *Ibid.* p. 50 ff.

the suppression of drunkenness, immorality, and vice, to keep against all these things the weapons of the law at their sharpest and to use them well. In the work of what may be termed the "practical" societies Churchmen and Nonconformists alike took part: we catch a glimpse of the younger Calamy preaching for the Society for the Reformation of Manners in 1699;[1] and to this same society even Thomas Firmin, Unitarian though he was, was allowed to belong.[2] But the parent societies were made up of Churchmen alone. All the more markedly, therefore, do they stand out as indicating the working of the Nonconformist spirit upon the Conformist field, the effort of the Nonconformist spirit to break through Conformity's iron-clamped door. They were by no means universally approved: besides the absurd suspicion that their members might be Romanist emissaries in disguise, there was the fear that they might weaken the Church, and the idea that their very existence put the Church under some sort of reproach.[3] Many of the Church authorities frowned upon them; and it was mainly men of the Latitudinarian school—in other words, men whose affection for the pure principle of Conformity was by no means passionate or above suspicion—who were prepared to bless.[4] A careful survey of the facts relative to these movements, and a careful estimate of their meaning, seals the previously expressed opinion that they sprang to life because faint and far echoes of the Nonconformist spirit's summons had penetrated, though all unrecognised for what they were, into a Conformist Church's ears. And strange as it may seem, a survey of our present period finds the greatest promise of the Nonconformist spirit's revival, not in any signal lifted up from the actual Nonconformist ranks, but in a banner hoisted upon the Established Church's walls by some who could not themselves read the device it bore.

[1] Calamy, *My Own Life*, i. 410.

[2] *Life of Mr. Thomas Firmin*, p. 63.

[3] Vernon, *Letters illustrative of the Reign of William III.*, ii. 128-130, 133, 134.

[4] Tillotson and others expressed hearty approval (Portus, *Caritas Anglicana*, p. 15).

SECTION 2

The Darkness before the Dawn

1714–1736

AUTHORITIES.—To a great extent as for the previous section. But we lose Burnet and Luttrell at the end of Anne's reign. From the denominational *Histories* Crosby's *History of the English Baptists* drops out after Anne, though Ivimey's *History of the English Baptists* still goes on. Stanhope's (Mahon's) *History of England from the Peace of Utrecht* comes to our aid on the general side. On the religious side add Calamy's *My Own Life*, which now becomes very useful inasmuch as Calamy bore a prominent part in the events he describes;[1] and Overton and Relton's *English Church from the Accession of George the First to the end of the Eighteenth Century.*

If we take the beginning of Whitefield's preaching in 1736[2] as marking roughly the commencement of the Evangelical Revival and the rekindling of religion in England, we may take the period from 1714 to the year named as marking the darkness before the dawn. It was the time when the religious decline of which we have previously spoken ran swiftly to its worst, when the general religious condition which had for a little while been "neither cold nor hot" settled into frozenness, and when all the Churches, like the Ephesian Church of ancient days, got furthest from their "first love." And so far as Nonconformity is concerned, we trace through these years the development and out-working of the forces and tendencies—all of them more or less linked back to haziness of Church ideals as to a cause directly or indirectly acting—which in the preceding section we noticed as being at work.

The Nonconformist aim, so far as Nonconformity had any aim beyond enjoying the liberty it had already won and the rest resulting therefrom, was the enlargement of that same liberty's bounds. The natural line of progress—having

[1] After this point, the Calamy who appears upon the stage is the grandson of the Calamy whom we have known as a participant in earlier events. But books quoted under Calamy's name, even before this, are by the younger man.

[2] "He was ordained and preached his first sermon in 1736. That was the famous occasion when he was reported to have driven fifteen people mad, and when the Bishop who ordained him, evidently believing that any sort of mind was better than the normal mind of the people in question, expressed his hope that the madness would be lasting."—W. B. FitzGerald, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 260. See Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, i. 50.

regard to the fact that the Toleration Act had bestowed so much and had yet not bestowed all that was required—was in the direction of removing remaining Nonconformist disabilities and of increasing positive Nonconformist power and range. Also, let it be remembered, the natural thing was that this should be taken as an end desirable *in itself*—not as an implication of or an accessory to the original great Nonconformist ideal. For from that idea Nonconformity was still upon the downward way. We have seen [1] how the doctrine of Toleration and its accompaniments had for many years been tending to supplant the original and more spiritual Nonconformist principle with those bodies which were built upon that more spiritual principle at the first—how, while from the beginning it was involved and implied in the Nonconformist ideal, it had passed for these bodies from the secondary place of an implication and an accompaniment to the primary rank; and we have seen [2] also how for those Nonconformists (the Presbyterians) who had not originally included toleration in their scheme, it had gradually crept in; and how on the final failure of Comprehension it had come to be looked upon as the utmost good any could hope to win, and a good, accordingly, from which the utmost benefits must be pressed. With the new danger passed by which even toleration in the reign of Anne had been threatened, with no more haunting fear of losing that which it had, Nonconformity might well look round and up to see whether to him that had more could not be given. And this was now the Nonconformist quest, so far as Nonconformist quest there was at all. It was a quest pursued with little more than lukewarmness; but after a fashion it was pursued.

On the whole the situation was favourable. It was at any rate quite unlikely that any assault would be delivered against the position the Nonconformists held. Both the first George (1714–1727) and the second were personally in favour not only of keeping religious liberty stretched to the furthest limits it had at present reached, but of making its field yet wider. To his first Council George declared that, while he was firmly determined to maintain the Established Churches both in the northern and southern kingdoms, he believed

[1] Vol. I. pp. 330, 403; *supra*, pp. 125, 126. [2] *Supra*, p. 47.

this could be effectually done without subtracting the smallest jot from the toleration which the Protestant Dissenters possessed ;[1] and his welcome to a Nonconformist deputation which offered an address of congratulation on his accession to the throne[2] must have made the occasion stand in sharp contrast with the corresponding one in the time of the late Queen. But there was more than the King's personal feeling to make the Nonconformists light-hearted, and even courageous for an aggressive campaign, had they chosen so to be. The instability of the general political situation told in their favour. Instability there was ; for although Anne's death had found the leading Jacobite plotters unprepared, and the Whigs had at the critical moment seized the reins, there was a good deal of feeling in the country—its amount not to be easily measured—in favour of the younger James ; and as the Nonconformists were of course among the staunchest supporters of the Hanoverian succession, their own cause being so closely bound up therewith, the Whig leaders, sailing along a track sown with floating mines as they seemed to be, were not likely to show to the Nonconformists such treachery as they had suddenly sprung upon them in 1711.[3] Even the Established Church could not but dread the substitution of the Pretender for George upon the throne ; and the situation was again something like what it had been in the time of James the Second, when for the sake of their own Church's safety Churchmen had been compelled to smile upon a Nonconformity for which they had kept nothing but frowns before. The Lutheran George was indeed anything but *persona grata* to Churchmen of the "High" type ; but then the old repugnance to and fear of Roman Catholicism remained strong as ever ; and what, from the point of view of Protestantism's security, the return of the Stuarts might mean, who could foretell ? It was almost, though not quite, true that, as Iberville wrote, "There is not one Tory foolhardy enough to pledge himself to acknowledge King James, unless he will become a member of the Church of England."[4]

[1] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, vii. 18.
[2] Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 299-301.
[3] *Supra*, p. 150.
[4] Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), i. 79. Iberville was the Pretender's agent in England.

The needed qualification of the statement is but small. There were certainly some Churchmen who, blind—and, as one cannot help believing, wilfully blind—to the inconsistency of the thing, intrigued with the exiled Prince. Of these the chief was Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester and Dean of Westminster. His bold spirit had counselled the immediate proclamation of James at Anne's death;[1] and he always declared—perhaps rightly—that a daring course at that hour would have been justified by success. For years afterwards he carried on a correspondence with James's court and afterwards with James himself—his career of treachery being ended in 1722 by banishment from the realm for life.[2] But a clergyman who worked for a Stuart restoration exposed himself to such sarcasms as that which Addison penned—to the effect that according to the "Jacobite creed" "the Church of England will always be in danger till it has a Popish King for its defender; that for the safety of the Church no subject should be tolerated in any religion different from the Established, but that the head of our Church may be of that religion which is most repugnant to it; that the Protestant interest in this nation, and in all Europe, could not but flourish under the protection of one who thinks himself obliged, on pain of eternal damnation, to do all that lies in his power for the extirpation of it."[3] It was an inconsistent position indeed. But comparatively few Churchmen took it up. And since the Church was, for its own reasons, driven to wish that George should stay, it was also driven at least to refrain from any hostile action toward the Nonconformists by whom that same wish was so heartily entertained. Local persecutions undoubtedly went on—that is, existing laws against Nonconformity were, when local Church dignitaries and magistrates felt so disposed, applied with utmost strictness and, if possible, strained so as to make them severer still. An outstanding instance, towards the end of the period

[1] Jesse, *Memoirs of the Court of England from the Revolution in 1688 to the Death of George the Second*, ii. 220-222; Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), i. 138.

[2] For Atterbury's career, see Macaulay's essay, originally written for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (*Works*, ed. Lady Trevelyan, vii. 283-296).

[3] *The Political Creed of a Tory Malcontent* (No. 14 of *The Freeholder*; pp. 81-85 of collected volume).

with which we are dealing (1733) is the prosecution of Doddridge for teaching an Academy without a licence. Doddridge had worked a scheme for the training of ministerial students, first at Kibworth, and then at Northampton, since 1729. The "Schism Act" had been dropped from the beginning of George the First's reign and, as we shall presently see, definitely repealed in 1719, so that all legal justification for the prosecution had disappeared; but under an old and sleeping ecclesiastical law an indictment could still be framed. The matter ran through several stages, only to be stopped at last by the intervention of the King.[1] Such things—which were small ebullitions of spite against Nonconformity rather than anything deserving a more dignified name—were done. The Jacobites scattered up and down the country made things uncomfortable, not to say hot, for the Nonconformists when they could, recognising in them noteworthy obstacles in the way of the cause they loved. The accession and coronation of George the First were marked by mob-riots such as had taken place at the accession of Anne, though their motive was now antagonism, instead of favour, towards the occupant of the throne. Oxford rioted in boisterous and extensive style.[2] Birmingham, Norwich, and many other places saw Nonconformist meeting-houses pulled down, Nonconformist houses invaded, Nonconformist men and women insulted and even injured, magistrates being often unable or unwilling to secure safety or redress[3]—the thing going so far that a Nonconformist deputation which waited upon the King after the suppression of the 1715 Rebellion made a special point of representing the case, and secured from him a promise that reparation should be made.[4] In such fashion as this Dissenters were made to feel that their enemies were still abroad; but of attack in the larger and systematic sense there was none. Moreover, the position

[1] Stanford, *Philip Doddridge*, pp. 68-71; *Doddridge's Correspondence and Diary*, iii. 131 ff.; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 9.

[2] *Studies in Oxford History* (Oxford Historical Society), pp. 145-148.

[3] See Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 169-173; Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, iii. 121; Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 313; *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. John Reynolds*, pp. 138 ff.; Gough, *History of the Quakers*, iv. 163 note.

[4] Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 317-319; Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, iv. 126-129.

of Nonconformists was strengthened, so far as their relation to the ruling powers was concerned, by their action during the Rebellion of 1715—into which, we may make passing note, many of the Non-Jurors allowed themselves to be drawn.[1] In many ways—in some places, such as Newcastle-on-Tyne, by enrolling themselves for actual military service in case of need[2]—Nonconformists demonstrated their loyalty to the reigning house and their readiness to spend themselves to the utmost on its behalf. Thus, under the conditions of the time, those whom it had been the habit to revile as traitors in spirit, to look upon as still tinged with the stain of the first Charles's blood and as merely suppressing a disloyalty they dared not avow, came to be regarded as among the chief bulwarks of the throne. And to all these things, assisting Nonconformity as they did assist it to lift up its head and appear as a positive good rather than a tolerated evil, must be added the fact that the tendency to liberality of thought and leniency of treatment, whereto reference has more than once been made, was gathering greater strength; and certain repressive laws were getting to be honoured less in the observance than in the breach. One may indeed say that, though not enforced, they stood upon the statute-book still to the nation's reproach; but in order to appraise the situation rightly one must turn the statement round, and say that although they still stood upon the statute-book, they were not enforced. The Act of 1698 against the Unitarians seems to have been forgotten as soon as it was passed:[3] that clause of the Toleration Act which required assent to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England as a condition of worship's freedom gradually ceased to impose its shibboleth on those who wanted to pass by;[4] even the whip of anti-Romanist law sometimes trailed loosely and idly from the authorities' hands.[5] Putting all these things together, it is

[1] Lathbury, *History of the Non-Jurors*, pp. 250 ff.; Overton, *The Non-Jurors*, pp. 336, 430. But Lathbury belittles the matter.

[2] *Calendar of State Papers* (Treasury Papers, 1714-1719), pp. 475, 476; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 402. See Toulmin's *Life of John Mort*, pp. 7, 8, for a letter from a commanding officer to "Rev. Mr. Woods" of Chowbent in connection with the matter.

[3] *Supra*, p. 158.

[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England*, vi. 155.

[5] *Ibid.* vi. 158; Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), i. 340.

clear that Nonconformity was, to put it at the lowest, safe against serious assault. And one is inclined to go further and to argue from that very safety that a definite and sustained forward movement in the positive interests of Nonconformity might easily have been made.

But Nonconformists were no more than lukewarm, and on the whole content to do little more than rest. The few attempts they put forth at enlarging the gains they already possessed were spasmodic and, except for the initial movement of each, feebly made; and they were not pushed home. The substitution of a secondary ideal for a primary entailed as its consequence—particularly at a period when there was no positive danger to kindle heroic moods—that even the secondary ideal was but half-heartedly sought. True, it did not absolutely follow that because attacks upon Nonconformity were ended or suspended, aggressive action on Nonconformity's part, however energetic, must result in success. The Government was not likely to encourage action of the kind; for if the instability of the political situation made Government anxious not to lose its Nonconformist friends, it also caused it to deprecate Nonconformist aggressiveness lest Church resentment thereat should pass into political disaffection, and angered ecclesiastical partisans should swell the ranks of Jacobite recruits. And the Church, willing as it might be to leave the Nonconformists alone, was quite unwilling to let them encroach beyond the line already laid down as marking the boundaries within which they were free. The distinction between "toleration" and "equality"[1] was implicitly, if not explicitly, present to the ecclesiastical mind, as it has always been; and while the first was accepted as a necessity, the suggestion of any approach to the second was jealously and indignantly warded off. The idea was that things must remain exactly as they were. It is significant that Archbishop Wake, who had passed from the Bishopric of Lincoln to the Primacy on Tenison's death in 1716,[2] and who had voted against Anne's Schism Bill in the Lords' debates, voted against the repeal of the same Bill a few years after George the First came to the throne;[3] saying

[1] *Supra*, p. 117. [2] Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, i. 29.
[3] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), i. 323.

that repeal of the Act was unnecessary, since the Dissenters had never been made to feel its weight.[1] Superficially inconsistent as they were, the two votes indicated the steadfast conviction of their author that while things ought not to be made worse for the Nonconformists, there was no call to make them better. Obviously, a conviction of this kind might under conceivable circumstances lead to curious consequences; and if, notwithstanding his opposition, the existing concessions to Nonconformity should be one by one withdrawn, a man who held it might in the end find himself turned into a fanatical persecutor merely by maintaining his protest against change. But Wake and those who thought with him probably did not contemplate ultimate possibilities such as these. In any case, this hesitancy to open wider the hand extended to the Nonconformists marked the dominant ecclesiastical mood. Wake and his brethren were on the whole in favour of "toleration," but in favour of anything like "equality," or of any movement towards it, they certainly were not. Nicholson, Bishop of Carlisle, in talking to the King upon the proposed repeal, explicitly identified himself with the view that, so far as the Dissenters were concerned, the toleration granted them in 1689 was a sufficient recompense for the loyalty to William which they had shown.[2] With this sort of *vis inertiae* in government and in Church the Nonconformists of course had to reckon in any endeavour they made to improve their holding and push their limits further away. Still, with courage a good deal might have been done. The very fact that the Government presently offered the Nonconformists a gift which the recipients would have done much better to refuse[3] shows that the Nonconformists, had they pressed the matter, could have wrung from the Government a gift which might have been accepted without reproach, inasmuch as it would really have been justice rather than a gift. The Quakers, indeed —bolder than their brethren—more than once afforded an

[1] "Had his Grace sat under the suspended sword of Dionysius, while feasting on the good things furnished by the see of Canterbury, would he have thought it needless to remove the weapon, because it had never fallen upon him?"—Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 91.

[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 181, 182, quoting from the *State Papers*.

[3] The "Regium Donum." See *infra*, pp. 186-189.

object-lesson in what determination could do. For instance, the affirmation which an act of William's reign[1] permitted them to substitute for an oath in civil affairs had been allowed only for a limited term. Immediately after George's accession they asked that the right should be made perpetual, and Parliament yielded them their desire.[2] After some years, they went further. The affirmation which they were called upon to make was objectionable to some inasmuch as it contained the phrase "in the presence of Almighty God"—a phrase which the objectors looked upon as turning the whole proceeding into the taking of an oath after all. The seemingly trivial change for which the Quakers asked was only allowed after hot debate, during which Atterbury spoke of the Quakers as hardly Christians at all; but allowed it was by the final division of June 1722.[3] At the very end of our period—in 1736—they failed, but only just failed, in an attempt to obtain some relief from the hardly-pressing tithe laws. They recognised that they must pay and that, since conscience would not allow them to pay voluntarily, they must pay under compulsion; but they desired that instead of imprisonment with the loss of all their goods—so far as this was severity sometimes carried—distraint for the tax itself and for reasonable costs should be the appointed penalty. In the end the Bill, notwithstanding that it had Walpole's strenuous support, failed in the Lords—ostensibly on technical grounds, but really owing to the influence of Gibson, Bishop of London—and the Quakers had to admit a defeat.[4] But the adverse majority was only nineteen; and that the Quakers should have scored two successes, and missed a third by a margin so small, is sufficient proof that a united policy of steady pressure on the part of the other Nonconformist bodies would not have lost its reward.

After a fashion, such a policy was pursued. At least it was framed, and its pursuit begun. With the Rebellion

[1] *Supra*, p. 169.

[2] Sewel, *History of the Quakers*, ii. 469; Gough, *History of the Quakers*, iv. 161. See a letter from Henry Goulding to Sir John Rodes in *A Quaker Post-Bag* (ed. Mrs. G. Locker-Lampson), pp. 104-106.

[3] Gough, as previous note, iv. 181-190.

[4] Gough, *History of the Quakers*, iv. 286; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 128-131.

extinguished, the moment for action seemed to have arrived; and advantage was to be taken of that gratitude towards the Nonconformists which the supporters of the House of Hanover were known to feel. Indeed, members of the House of Commons to the number of more than two hundred took independent action, meeting at a tavern previous to the session of 1717 and resolving to take the needful steps for securing to Nonconformists the relief too long delayed.[1] That in doing this they were acting in accordance with the wishes of the King was shown when George, at the opening of Parliament, declared his belief that the Church of England, as the great bulwark of Protestantism, would herself reap highest benefit from "the union and mutual charity of all Protestants" and expressed himself as "determined to encourage all those who act agreeably to the constitution of these my kingdoms, and consequently to the principles on which my government is founded."[2] It appeared for a while as though the Nonconformists might obtain the repeal not only of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, but of the Corporation and Test Acts as well. It is, by the way, significant of the general attitude of the Congregational Nonconformists and their immediate allies that it was upon the repeal of these two Acts that their minds were fixed, and not upon such a matter as that of tithe, which bulked more largely in the Quaker view. For the latter was much more closely connected with the positive assertion and maintenance of the original Nonconformist ideal, while the former was more in the line of pressing that "toleration" or "liberty" conception which had with so many become the principal thing. Certainly it was on this repeal that their gaze was bent; and with the view of attaining it they had presented numerous addresses to the throne.[3] The throne was willing enough. For purely political reasons, apart from those of justice, it was desirable that repeal should be achieved; for in many places the exclusion of Nonconformists from municipal office resulted in the manning of Corporations almost

[1] Rapin's *History of England*, as continued by Tindal and Smollett, v. 84 note. [2] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, vii. 502, 503.
[3] For an example, see Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 366 ff.

or altogether exclusively by Jacobites; so that in Leeds, to take one instance, "the King is openly proclaimed an usurper in the Market Place on a market-day by Alderman Preston's servant, yet no prosecution," and "whenever any vacancy occurs in the Corporation immediately 'tis filled with the hottest Jack they can find."[1] But it soon became evident that the hopes of the Nonconformists and the desires of the King had out-run the practical possibilities of the situation as the King's ministers gauged them. Reluctance in Church and Parliament to go so far appeared too great a dead-weight to be lifted; and the session of 1717 saw nothing done. The Nonconformists did indeed endeavour for a time to spur on the unwilling steed by holding meetings throughout the country to demand the repeal of all the Acts.[2] But their zeal was not proof against a royal message which, reaching them through Barrington Shute, subsequently Lord Barrington, informed them that by persisting in their full demands at present (the future would doubtless bring a more favourable chance) they might do harm both to themselves and him.[3] At once damping down their fires, the Nonconformists consented to drop the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts from their programme, and fixed their attention upon a smaller boon.[4] And by an Act which received the Royal assent in February 1719 the boon was granted. As introduced by Earl Stanhope[5] into the House of Lords in the preceding December, the Act proposed something midway between the complete relief which Nonconformists wished for and the partial relief which in the end was all they obtained; for besides repealing the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, it suggested also that certain clauses of the Corporation and Test Acts should go. The smallness of the majority—eighteen—on the second

[1] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 183, 184.

[2] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 228, 229.

[3] Rapin's *History of England*, as continued by Tindal and Smollett, v. 117 note.

[4] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 89; Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), i. 490.

[5] James, first Earl (1673–1721). The Earl Stanhope who comes upon the stage later in the century is Charles, third Earl (1753–1816). Stanhope the historian, whose works are referred to in the present and other sections, is Philip Henry, fifth Earl (1805–1875).

reading of the Bill led to the dropping of that part of it which referred to the last-named Acts, although, as the majority on the third reading stood at precisely the same figure, it would appear that the original proposals might as well have been retained. Both in the Upper and Lower Houses debate was hot and long. Wake led the episcopal opposition in the Lords, but found quite a number of Bishops—Kennet, Hoadly, and others—arrayed against him; while in the Commons dispute ranged chiefly round an amendment, ultimately defeated, for restricting the benefits of the Act to persons of orthodox Trinitarian belief. But in the end the Commons passed the Bill in January, and the Nonconformists stood once again where they had been placed by the Toleration Act of William the Third thirty years before.[1]

So the first effort for repeal of the obnoxious Acts which had pressed upon Nonconformity since the time of Charles the Second was strangled almost at its birth. Poor as it was, it had no successor even equally vigorous. For shortly after the Act of 1719, the Nonconformists permitted such energy as they possessed to be checked by the receipt of grants—the "Regium Donum"—from the royal purse, grants made at Walpole's instigation in order that he might not be hampered by inconvenient Nonconformist demands. Walpole, who had quitted the ministry in 1717 and returned to it in 1721,[2] would have found difficulties multiplying on his hands if the Nonconformists had been too persistent; and although nothing in the way of an explicit bargain was made, it cannot be doubted that silence as to repeal was hoped for as a result of what was done. There were at least two precedents for royal gifts to Nonconformists—one in the pensions given by Charles the Second to some Presbyterian ministers and the same monarch's gift of a thousand guineas to John Owen for distribution among the Nonconformist poor,[3] and a nearer one in a personal present of fifty pounds, followed by a sum of five hundred pounds "for the use and behalf of the poor widows of dissenting ministers"

[1] Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), i. 490-493; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 89-93.

[2] Stanhope, as former note, i. 393, ii. 2, 43.

[3] *Supra*, p. 97.

made in 1721 to Calamy when that minister dedicated a volume of sermons to George the First.[1] Two years later Daniel Burgess, son of a Presbyterian minister and secretary to the Princess of Wales, thought that the fountain of favour might possibly be opened again, and made application in that sense. On Walpole's advice, the King ordered that a half-yearly grant of five hundred pounds should henceforth be paid for the same purpose as that which had governed the first. Later on the amount was somewhat enlarged. Authorised representatives of the Presbyterian and Independent denominations were appointed to distribute the money as they thought fit.[2] In judging the matter, it must be remembered that at this time (of the further developments we shall have to speak by and by[3]) the grant was a gift from the King's private purse, and was made specifically for the relief of poverty, so that the question of a State endowment of Nonconformity did not come in at all. Even if it had, the Presbyterians need not on that ground have hesitated, since they had no objection whatever to a State establishment or support of religion. Calamy expressly says that there is no reason why those excluded from "the emoluments of the National Church" should not receive Government moneys to make up for what they lose.[4] This, of course, is not a view which the other Nonconformist denominations would have been able to take; but even they did not, under the circumstances, actually compromise any principle by receiving what fell to their share. If King George chose to make grants to them out of the money at his private disposal, they could take them and remain staunch Nonconformists still. But this said, it must be added that the wisdom of doing so—for both Presbyterians and others—was another matter. For it is quite certain that the King expected something in return, and that Walpole was still more expectant. At the time of the first gift to Calamy, the King remarked that, "in the approaching election of Members of Parliament he depended on them

[1] Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 444-450.

[2] On the "Regium Donum" see, besides the references presently given, Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 520-523, 524-527, where most of the important facts are set down.

[3] *Infra*, p. 323.

[4] Calamy, *My Own Life*, ii. 472.

(the Dissenters) to use their influence in favour of such as were hearty for himself and his family."[1] As for Walpole —although the common idea that he once declared every man to have his price rests upon a misapprehension[2]—he certainly hoped in this instance that the grant would be a sort of bribe to silence, and that the Dissenters would cease their agitation for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts if they received doles of the offered kind. He was right. There is no doubt that many Nonconformists felt themselves hampered. We know that Calamy, although as late as 1722 he had been having confidential communications with the Government in reference to repeal,[3] withdrew any pressure or persuasion after 1723. An anonymous writer in 1774[4] produced instances of various Nonconformist ministers who had, each in turn, through a good many years, appeared lukewarm in the cause, and says plainly that the "Regium Donum" was at the bottom of it. He probably works his evidence for something more than it is really worth in his zeal to make out his case; but the attempted defence by another writer[5] entirely breaks down; and Nonconformists taking the grant were in an equivocal position, to say the least. So early as 1734 a pamphleteer suggested that gold was weighing Nonconformity down, causing it to go slowly and heavily along the road to perfect freedom, and seriously crippling its strength.[6] And by 1736 opinion to this effect had so far developed among Nonconformists themselves that at a meeting of the "Three Denominations"[7] held in that year a motion declaring the acceptance of the grant to be inadvisable was made.[8] The motion was lost, but Nonconformist objection grew as the years went on, and it was by Nonconformist objection in

[1] Calamy, *My Own Life*, i. 447.

[2] What Walpole said was, "All *those* men have their price." He was referring to some "pretended patriots" of whom the statement was perfectly true. Coxe, *Memoirs of Walpole*, i. 757.

[3] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 215, 216.

[4] *London Magazine*, xliii. 546 ff. The passage occurs in one of a series of articles on the attitude of Dissenters in regard to repeal.

[5] Rees, *A Sketch of the History of The Regium Donum*, pp. 21 ff.

[6] See *Congregational Magazine* for March 1837 (New Series, i. 153 ff.). The article (pp. 141-165) covers practically the whole controversy and its history.

[7] *Infra*, p. 189.

[8] *London Magazine*, xliii. 547.

the end that the grant was stopped. To this point, however, we shall have to recur.[1] For the moment we have only to note how the slackness of the Nonconformists in the reign of George the First allowed them to accept a gift obviously designed to render them slacker still, and—as we pass on—how it fulfilled its design.[2]

It was not likely, when Nonconformists were so ready to occupy a position which almost compelled them to speak softly as to their desires, that much would be attempted or that anything particular would be done. For a few years even attempts amounted to nothing at all. Then there was some little stirring of the stagnant waters; and in July 1727, by which time George the Second was on the throne, the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist ministers of London formed themselves into a united organisation for the purpose of asserting Nonconformist claims. Ministers of the "Three Denominations" had on occasion acted in concert before; but it was in 1727 that the formally organised body which continues in existence still, had its rise.[3] It may have been the sign of renewed Nonconformist vitality thus given that led to the passing of the first "Annual Indemnity Act" in the same year. The recognition of Nonconformist grievances made by the Act was so slight as scarcely to deserve the name; for it merely relieved from penalties those who through ignorance or accident had failed to comply with the requirements of the Test and Corporation Acts; and it in no way made the path easier for any Nonconformist to municipal or other posts.[4] Such as it was, however, the Act—which was thereafter passed annually till the Test and the Corporation Acts were repealed in 1828—was something. But again the flickering flame of Nonconformist zeal died down. Then in 1732 the ministers of

[1] *Infra*, p. 415.

[2] The Irish "Regium Donum," it may be well to state, had a quite different origin. It was distributed among Irish Presbyterians, and began with a grant made to them by William the Third out of Belfast Customs dues. It was abolished at the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1869.

[3] See an article called "The History of the Congregational Board," by T. James (*Congregational Year Book 1867*, pp. 406-417).

[4] Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), i. 323, 324. For the precise effect of the Indemnity Act, see also an article by T. Bennett entitled "Hallam and the Indemnity Acts" (*Law Quarterly Review*, xxvi. 400-407).

the "Three Denominations," as if rousing themselves for a further spurt, called up lay reinforcements. Two meetings were held in November, resulting in the formation of the body known as the "Dissenting Deputies"—which, like the "Three Denominations," continues to-day—a Committee for which every Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist Church within ten miles of London was to have two members chosen year by year, and whose business lay in caring for and defending Nonconformist civil rights.[1] But again the mere effort of rising from one sleep seemed to produce exhaustion and another; for the deputies came to the not very heroic decision that immediate action on the "repeals" had no chance of success.[2] There was another lull. When 1734 and a general election arrived, the Nonconformists again pulled themselves together and put forth all their strength on Walpole's behalf, and, after the contest was over, asked him in 1735 to do them right. But Walpole's caution thought it best to let sleeping dogs lie; and he bade the Nonconformists wait.[3] They waited; but Walpole had added to his recommendation of patience a suggestion—which he had no doubt devoutly hoped would not be remembered or obeyed—that next session the Nonconformists should, if they cared, act for themselves.[4] In 1736, accordingly, Mr. Plumer, Member for Hertfordshire, moved the repeal of the two much-hated Acts. Walpole picked his way carefully over the broken ice, made a speech which might mean anything or nothing, and then voted against the proposal, which was lost by a majority of 128.[5] A Nonconformist deputation waited upon Walpole shortly after to make an attempt at bringing him to a firmer stand; and

[1] *A Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Deputies appointed to protect the Civil Rights of Dissenters* (ed. 1814), pp. 1, 2; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 7, 8.

[2] *A Sketch, etc.*, as previous note, p. 3. One history, after recording this fact, curiously goes on to say, "At last, therefore, there seemed to be some probability that the civil rights of the Dissenters would receive something like adequate attention from themselves" (Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, p. 270). How a resolve to do nothing could create this "probability" does not appear.

[3] Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), ii. 280.

[4] Stoughton, as former note, vi. 10.

[5] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, ix. 1046 ff.; Coxe, *Memoirs of Walpole*, i. 476.

one cannot but wish that at one point of the interview Nonconformist patience had broken down and Nonconformist impatience had flared. Walpole—who was at the time smarting under the defeat of the Bill for giving relief to the Quakers in the matter of tithe, as previously recorded,[1] and less disposed than ever to stake anything of real value for the Nonconformist cause—made his usual reply to the effect that, whatever his private inclinations might be, the time was unripe. "You have so repeatedly returned this answer," said Dr. Chandler, the deputation's head, "that I trust you will give me leave to ask when the time will come?" "If you require a specific answer," Walpole replied, "I will give it you in a word—never!"[2] But it does not appear that even a rebuff so rude could prick those who received it into any enduring wrath or into any consuming passion of fight. Just beyond our period—in 1739—one more attempt at repeal was made in the Lower House;[3] but save for this the matter was as it were put to bed for many years to come. So ends the rather inglorious record of Nonconformist activity, so far as concerns its quest of what had now become its ideal, from 1714 to 1738. And in what it shows us of mere effervescent spurts of action which did not endure—of assaults not pushed through to the citadel—of movements which were not much more, and led to not much more, than the galvanic struggles of a man restless in his sleep—it shows also that the substitution of a secondary ideal for a primary entailed as its consequence that even the secondary ideal was pursued with only half the earnestness of the Nonconformist heart.

Watching how the forces whose presence upon the field we noticed in the previous section worked themselves out, we see next that the Socinian tendency grew strong—and, further, that it now grew stronger in certain Nonconformist quarters than in the Established Church, thus reversing the state of things which originally obtained. We caught some signs of the tendency's working among the General Baptists;[4] and we heard how the muttered suspicion of Socinianism beat

[1] *Supra*, p. 183.

[2] Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), ii. 280. But, according to Stanhope, this took place before Mr. Plumer's motion in Parliament.

[3] *Infra*, p. 266.

[4] *Supra*, p. 156, 157.

up through the discussion between Congregationalists and Presbyterians initiated in 1691 and temporarily closed in 1698.[1] Events which occurred in 1719 showed that in both the denominations named movement towards Unitarian opinions had been going on with accelerating speed, and that it had brought both nearly to the full journey's end. It will be remembered that the Presbyterians, in part probably as a result of the general vagueness in which their whole position was wrapped, had lowered the temperature of their Calvinism: the General Baptists had of course been from the beginning of their denominational existence Arminian in their views; so that one is driven to take as something more than a casual coincidence the connection between Arminianism and Socinianism which in these cases is thus seemingly shown to exist. An absolutely *necessary* connection between the two does not, of course, obtain. The Arminian Wesley was intensely orthodox on the question of the full Deity of Christ; while the case of Robert Robinson[2] shows that a Calvinist may lapse into heterodoxy on the same doctrinal point. It is quite true also that the high Calvinism of those days has been surrendered in later times by many Churches which cling fast to the orthodox doctrine of the Deity of Christ;[3] but it must be remembered as to these that the modifications of Calvinist opinion which they have adopted have been adopted deliberately, step by step, and as part of a positive re-constructive theological process conducted throughout with full sense of responsibility and with all the issues and consequences kept clearly in view. But an Arminianism into which a denomination is driven by mere reaction from what appears to be Calvinism's unbearable austerity, or an Arminianism into which a denomination simply lapses because the rarefied air of Calvinism's great heights cannot be breathed, naturally enough tends to "lower" rather than to "higher" ideas of the moral problem of mankind, and consequently of salvation, and consequently again of Him through Whom salvation is wrought. An abandonment of Calvinism which is nothing else than a mere falling down from it—an abandonment of it, to put it another way, which is a mere letting of it go, not the substitution for

[1] *Supra*, p. 162. [2] *Infra*, p. 251. [3] See Vol. I. p. 189 note.

it of something equally definitely conceived and equally charged with "moral imperative" for the human conscience and the human will—is likely enough to lose grip upon a Christ of perfect Deity if for no other reason than that He harmonises best, if it may be so said, with the strenuous system which has faded out of sight. Admittedly, there were other causes helping to produce the Socinian lapse of the period under review. The "Deistic" controversy was in full swing; and Lord Herbert of Cherbury, the "Father of English Deism" (1583–1648) had many children who at the beginning of the eighteenth century were proclaiming and improving the ideas their ancestors had held, affirming that religion was not or need not be anything more than a high morality and that supernaturalism might well be put away from human thought.[1] But such influence as Deism exerted upon professedly Christian men and women would attack all denominations alike; so that we are driven back once more upon the distinction between the Calvinistic and the Arminian bodies, and upon the fact that the Deistic influence told more forcefully upon the second than upon the first. Passing to the facts, it was in a series of meetings held at Salters' Hall, London, in February and March 1719, that the Socinian tendency first became clearly manifest; and it was after that same series of meetings that the same tendency was avowed in many Churches in which its presence had not been known, either to the Churches themselves or to other people, before. These London meetings followed upon a dispute in Exeter, where three Presbyterian ministers—James Peirce the chief of the three—were suspected of heterodox views. There in the West, indeed, the controversy waxed so hot that Church of England clergymen made it a text for sermons on the wickedness of Dissent, and declared that those who had first denied the Church were now going on to deny their Saviour too; while a judge at the Exeter Assizes thought it necessary to deliver a homily on the awful sin of Arianism in the course of his grand jury's charge.[2] The ministers of London were either invited or thrust themselves

[1] For Deism, see Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (3rd ed.), chaps. ii.-iv.

[2] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 171.

into the midst of the strife, determining to draw up an "advice" to be sent to the Exeter controversialists. In the end, two "advices" were actually forwarded (neither of which reached Exeter till the dismissal of Peirce and a second minister, Hallett, had there closed the dispute); for the Assembly which had been convened to draw up the contemplated helpful advisory paper found itself confronted by a discussion nearer home, and split into two parts, each of which despatched its own missive out to the West. The severance arose out of a suggestion, made at the Assembly's second meeting, that in forwarding its "advice" the Assembly should itself formally declare its adherence to orthodox Trinitarian views—which suggestion at once drew protest from a section which turned out, when a vote was taken, to possess a majority of four. The ostensible ground of the protest was that the resolution was really the imposition of a man-made creed; but it was suspected by many—as events showed, with reason—that behind this contention there lay dislike of, or vacillation upon, the Trinitarian doctrine itself. This suspicion produced a resolve to make a further test at the Assembly's next meeting; but when on March 3 it was moved that, quite apart from any question of the message to be sent to Exeter, those present should declare their faith in the Trinity and in the Deity of Christ, according to the first of the Thirty-nine Articles and the fifth and sixth questions of the Westminster Catechism, the President—Dr. Joshua Oldfield—ruled the motion out as irrelevant, with the consequence that sixty ministers seceded and set up a meeting of their own. This was the "subscribing" Assembly, as distinct from the "non-subscribing" Assembly constituted by those who remained behind. The "non-subscribing" ministers, it should be repeated, justified their action on the same ground they had previously adduced—namely, their objection to making a human creed a test of soundness in the faith. Nor is there any reason to suppose them insincere when they thus spoke. But it is quite evident that they did not know themselves. As has happened many times since, so it happened then—the sudden application of an unexpected test proved that they had, perhaps all unconsciously, moved to a platform from which they could not satisfy it; and the

instinctive repugnance which, because of the confused mental attitude whence it sprang, announced itself, when it came up to their lips, as a repugnance to tests in general, was really a very special repugnance to the particular test of the hour.[1] A very similar situation was to arise more than a century later within Congregationalism itself;[2] but whereas on the present occasion the contention was merely that "man-made" creeds must not be imposed, this was enlarged on the later emergence of the problem to a contention that whether the full doctrine of Christ's Deity were held or not was in itself a comparatively unimportant matter. Of the bearing of this larger contention—which had really been implicit in the smaller—upon the Nonconformist principle, something will be said at the due time and place. To return to the earlier occasion—what the sequel of the incident proved was that Socinianism had already appropriated to itself many minds which had not consciously signed themselves over to its possession. From that time onward views involving the denial of the proper Deity of Christ spread rapidly or showed themselves patently among those ministers who had made up the "non-subscribing" party and, naturally, among their flocks. And in the main, though there are a few exceptions to be set against both parts of the statement, the "subscribers" had been the Congregationalists and the Calvinistic Baptists, while the Presbyterians and the General Baptists had composed the other or "non-subscribing" camp. (The Presbyterian Calamy and the Congregationalist Watts, it may be mentioned, had refused to take part in the proceedings at all.) And what happened in London was as a torch at whose kindling many responsive fires were set ablaze. The General Baptists dropped fast down the Socinian slope,[3] though their special Baptist doctrine held them back from an actual junction with the Presbyterians who, so far as the question of Socinianism is concerned, were their allies. Their decline in

[1] On the "Salters' Hall Controversy" consult Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 240-247; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), v. 417-420; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 168-197; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 528-538. Dale gives references (note, p. 538) to various pamphlets, etc., connected with the affair. As to some of the minor facts, accounts vary a good deal.

[2] *Infra*, p. 373.

[3] Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, i. 479, 480.

numbers and in more important things, and the wind of revival which swept over at least some small stretch of the low levels whereon they came to lie, we shall notice in their place.[1] The Presbyterian congregations in many parts of the country as well as in London ran along the same course[2] with a speed which quickly brought Presbyterianism in the earlier sense of the term to extinction (the Presbyterianism of later times was due to a re-introduction of the system from another quarter and not to a revival of the older remnants[3]), and—while in many cases retaining the Presbyterian title—became the first congregations of that organised Unitarian Church which has been living and active in England from then till now. A few Presbyterian congregations, scattered here and there, maintained the orthodox Presbyterian doctrinal tradition and hoped for better times;[4] but they were so few as hardly to count. The Presbyterian Churches which were composed of Scotch residents in England also remained orthodox; but they were quite unconnected with English Presbyterianism properly so termed. Those English Presbyterian Churches which threw off the contagion of Socinianism for the most part entered perforce into closer relations with the Congregationalists, often being compelled to accept Congregational ministers because ministers of their own order could not be obtained, and feeling it in any case necessary to dissociate themselves from what Presbyterianism had become; and, besides this, many individual Presbyterians quitted the heterodox Presbyterian Churches and joined the Congregational worshippers nearest at hand. In this way the union or association between Presbyterianism and Congregationalism, dating from the "Heads of Agreement" of 1690,[5] was of course finally dissolved, inasmuch as one of the contracting parties to the partnership virtually ceased to exist; while on the other hand—it may be incidentally noted—the mingling of Presbyterian with Congregational *individuals* would tend naturally to carry further,

[1] *Infra*, pp. 252-254.

[2] See Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 508 ff.

[3] See *infra*, pp. 394-396.

[4] Drysdale, as former note, p. 561; M'Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery*, pp. 317, 318; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 304, 305.

[5] *Supra*, p. 160.

in the way of clouding the original Congregational Church-idea, the work which the approximation of the Presbyterian and Congregational *bodies*, started as far back as the ejectment of 1662, had already carried so far.[1] The immediate point, however, is that for the Presbyterians what had been contained in, or prophesied by, their first forsaking of their primary Church-idea was now fully unfolded or fulfilled. Upon slack gripping of the primary Church-idea had followed slack gripping of that Calvinistic faith which had put iron into the Church's blood and which had made God's process of redemption, with all involved therein, appear so great a thing that only great doctrinal formulae could in any wise interpret or describe it; and upon this slack gripping of the Calvinistic faith—other things of course helping, but this being by no means the smallest factor among the rest—had finally followed the fall into Socinianism which we have seen them make.

The fall into Socinianism, as a final issue of loose hold upon fundamental principles, concerns us however in respect of Presbyterianism alone.[2] When we turn to the decline of religion in the more general sense, it is not in one denomination, but in all, that the symptoms of decline appear. During this period, indeed, care for worthiness of any kind, still more care for religion in the highest sense, touched their nadir with practically all classes in the land. Confessions of the fact abound to such an extent that, even if we make large allowance for exaggeration and pessimism, the state of things must be reckoned as extremely bad. In general society, manners and morals were degenerating so swiftly, and contempt for religion was mounting so high, that in 1723 Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could sarcastically speak

[1] *Supra*, p. 34.

[2] A foot-note is a sufficiently prominent place in which to say that the charge of Socinianism was once brought against Watts, and with less energy against Doddridge. Both men dealt by argument rather than by railing with Socinian opponents, and so rendered themselves suspect in the eyes of some. And both men, in seeking to commend Trinitarian doctrine to the reason, used expressions which criticism might easily seize upon if it felt so inclined. Watts also dallied for a while with the hypothesis of a pre-existent humanity in Christ, and thus gave fault-finders another hold. Watts's supposed heresy led to a violent quarrel between him and Bradbury, one of the most noted Congregationalists of the time—at least, the quarrel was violent on Bradbury's side. See Milner, *Life of Watts*, pp. 389 ff.

of a Bill being in preparation to have the word "not" taken out of the Commandments and "clapped into" the Creed:[1] from the Establishment many mourning voices issued telling of infidelity, flaunting wickedness, and kindred evils running riot everywhere;[2] and when we turn from the Establishment to Nonconformity, we find that while the grosser sins of irreligious society were of course absent within a professedly religious region, actual piety had ebbed sadly far out from the shore. Activities of a certain sort—activities which might perhaps be called philanthropic rather than religious, such as the establishment of schools and the making of provision for the maintenance of the ministry—were indeed being carried on.[3] But this counts for little in face of the mass of testimony to Nonconformist religious decline. Even the establishment of schools was an attempt to rectify an evil which previous Nonconformist lassitude had allowed to come in; for whereas Lord Cowper had stated in the debates of the Schism Bill that education was largely in the Dissenters' hands,[4] an anonymous writer of 1731 remarks that the facts were now precisely the other way.[5] As to numbers, these are admittedly an unsatisfactory test; but for what they are worth, notice may be given to the following facts—that according to an estimate made in 1731 the number of Presbyterian and Independent buildings in London was larger only by one than it had been in 1695[6]—that when an anonymous writer of 1730 remarked upon Nonconformity's numerical down-grade,[7] the previously mentioned anonymous writer of 1731 could only counter him, not by categorical denial, but by pleading that the

[1] *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (ed. 1893), i. 473.

[2] For instance, Berkeley declares that "little can be hoped if we consider the corrupt degenerate age we live in . . . we have cancelled all respect for whatever our laws and religion repute sacred" (*An Essay towards preventing the Ruin of Great Britain*, p. 26).

[3] Specially by the Baptists. See Crosby, *History of the English Baptists*, iv. 114 ff., 199 ff.; Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688-1891*, pp. 257, 258.

[4] *Supra*, p. 153.

[5] *Some Observations upon the present state of the Dissenting Interest, etc.*, p. 30.

[6] From the *Palmer MS.* (Dr. Williams's Library). See Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 254, 255: Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 540, 541.

[7] *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest, etc.* The anonymous author was really Strickland Gough.

down-grade was not so steep as was charged[1]—and that between 1714 and 1731 at least fifty Nonconformist ministers had gone over to the Established Church.[2] And certainly the fact that a pamphlet war should wage round the alleged "decay of the Dissenting interest," and that men like Doddridge, Watts, and Abraham Taylor should feel it necessary to join in,[3] demonstrates very clearly that things were far from being what they ought to be. Quitting the arithmetical test, we find direct witness to religion's falling temperature lying abundant and close at hand. The Quaker Assemblies found it necessary to send remonstrance, rebuke, and exhortation—all based upon an evident dying of zeal—in the addresses to members who were for the most part upholding the Quaker flag with slack and nerveless hands.[4] One of the most prominent men in the Baptist ministry—Joseph Stennett—lamented that religion had come to mean little for many who professed it, was taken as making only small claims, and was offered lip service alone.[5] Watts declares that Nonconformists neglected worship public and private, were growingly oblivious of the line which ought to separate men of the world from men of the Church, and were even becoming lax in their judgment of such things as amusement, business, conscientiousness, and carelessness of speech.[6] Amid the generally prevailing religious apathy we do come upon tokens that some were alive to its existence and seeking to find means whereby zeal might be quickened again—yet the very earnestness with which these gave themselves to seeking a remedy goes to show what inroads the disease had made. The Aylesbury Churches appointed a day of humiliation, fasting, and prayer,

[1] *Some Observations on the present state of the Dissenting Interest, etc.*, pp. 5, 6.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 10.

[3] Doddridge, *Free Thoughts on the most probable means of reviving the Dissenting Interest*; Watts, *An Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians* (*Works*, Leeds ed. iv. 587-635); Taylor, *Spiritual Declensions*. Watts (as cited, p. 631) speaks of "the decaying interest of religion, and the withering state of Christianity at this day."

[4] Samples of sentences and paragraphs from these may be seen in *Extracts from the Minutes and Epistles of the London Yearly Meeting*.

[5] In a sermon entitled *The Christian Strife*.

[6] The points come up more or less incidentally in the *Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians*. See also Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 556-558.

"to entreat Almighty God . . . in great goodness to revive His seemingly dying cause."[1] The Berkhampsted Nonconformists called for the fixing of a similar day "upon the present state of the Churches, upon the account of that coldness and want of zeal towards God and religion and love towards one another."[2] And in 1731 a number of laymen formed a sort of Society—bearing a more or less remote resemblance to the "religious societies" of the Established Church—for the revival of religious thought and life. The Society—"The King's Head Society," as it was called, because it met first in a house and then at a tavern bearing the "King's Head" sign—pursued a vigorous course and, besides keeping its primary object steadfastly in view, instituted the "Lime Street Lectures" for the defence of the purity of the faith, and established the "King's Head Academy" for the training of ministers on stronger and more thorough lines.[3] Surveying all the evidence—both the direct evidence pointing to declension and the indirect evidence afforded by the efforts of men who were doing their best to set right times spiritually so out of joint—we can reach no other verdict than that among Nonconformists of every order religion had lost its inspiring power, its compulsion, its greatness, its thrill, and that the garden where the things that are lovely and of good report should have been cultivating their fairest flowers in profusion was becoming weed-grown and bare.

So low had the fortunes of the Nonconformist spirit fallen. So dim had grown the vision of the high Nonconformist ideal. And so far had concrete Nonconformity drifted from manifesting the Nonconformist spirit and the Nonconformist ideal in whose service it should have been ardently engaged. Some of the Nonconformist bodies which had come down the direct line of ancestral descent from the first Nonconformist pioneers had half forgotten their ancient inspirations, had shifted their gaze from the issue which was central to issues which were, however important, circum-

[1] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 221. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 222.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 263-265; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 558, 559.

ferential and no more: some of them, through the intermingling with them of men and women for whom Nonconformity was rather an accident than a principle, an enforced attitude rather than a chosen spiritual road, had had their diluted apprehension of Nonconformist principle diluted still more: some of them, having left "a little rift within the lute" when first they took it up, were now showing how the unregarded rift, if it did not by and by "make the music mute," must at least make it less beautiful, less penetrating, less instinct with grace; and of some of them most or all of these things were true. And in the end, religion—the thing which for all, Conformists and Nonconformists alike, is the thing of chief concern—grew cold. To this the downward progression had come. The motive forces whereby that downward progression had been driven on were, of course, not recognised by those whom they had victimised, though, as we have seen, the low spiritual levels of the time were rightly gauged by not a few. For a moment, the writer of 1730[1] seems to veer towards the true track when, in respect of Dissenters generally, he ascribes their decline in great part to ignorance of their own principles. But when he goes on to name the principles which Nonconformists had forgotten, and which they must recall to prominence in their mental field if the plague was to be stayed, he suggests two as chief. First he puts the "spirit of liberty," "freedom to worship God according to the dictates of conscience"; and secondly, he names the confusion and "indecency" of liturgical prayer, bowing at the altar, and other things of the kind.[2] Of any desire to restore that profounder and more mystical view of the Church by which early Independency had been inspired there is no smallest sign. And how much of weight or compelling magnetism these "principles" added to the Nonconformist ideal for the writer who advocated them as the panacea for the prevalent ills is shown by the fact that a few months after publishing his pamphlet he himself went over to the Established Church.[3] By him and by others the existing evils might be recognised, but their

[1] *Supra*, p. 198.

[2] *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest, etc.*, pp. 4, 6, 23, etc.

[3] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 252.

secret was undiscovered still. It is we who, looking back, can see, at any rate to some extent, what was hidden from contemporary eyes.

It must appear a somewhat melancholy summing-up. But with the lowest point—as implied in the decay of religion—reached, the upward movement of return began. How it began, whom it affected, how far back towards the original heights it ultimately climbed, we must now seek to trace out. Only, it must be remembered that progress back towards a lost ideal—especially when the lost ideal is itself present to repentant minds only as a vague regret and the causes of the loss have been but imperfectly diagnosed, so that the return is made gropingly and with eyes dimmed or bound—is not an easy thing. Movement will be slow. Chance influences may easily deflect the wavering, groping pilgrimage from the road it ought to keep. At many points of the return journey there will be parting ways between which choice must be perplexing, since the original starting-point, now the goal, is not clearly outlined against the sky. It can hardly be a straight or swift path back. And in view of these considerations, the question rises within us, as we begin to trace the road which Nonconformity followed as it sought the road home again—"Has the old glorious summit really been at last recaptured and reoccupied by Nonconformity's triumphantly-returning feet?" We shall see.

BOOK IV

THE PARTIAL RETURN TO THE IDEAL

CHAPTER I

THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION

SECTION 1

The Resurrection of Puritanism within the Established Church

AUTHORITIES.—*The New History of Methodism*, edited by W. J. Townsend, H. B. Workman, and George Eayrs, affords a general survey of the rise of Methodism. *Lives* of John Wesley are numerous, though the *New History* observes that none of them can be called "standard." That of Luke Tyerman is probably the most useful. Southey's may be placed next in importance, though Southey was not the man to understand a religiously passionate temperament like Wesley's. The edition of Wesley's *Journal* edited by Curnock is far the best. Tyerman has also written a good *Life of Whitefield*, and for Charles Wesley Whitehead's *Life* may be used. *The Life of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon* is anonymous. Stevens's *History of Methodism* may be studied in conjunction with the *New History of Methodism* mentioned above. Side-lights on Methodism, and on the effect it produced in various classes of society, may be obtained from practically all the historical and biographical literature dealing with the period. Indeed, it may be said that a really thorough understanding of the influence of Methodism calls for some acquaintance with literature of the kind.

THE first thing to notice, as we begin to trace Nonconformity's course back to the ideal it had so largely lost, and to inquire how far towards the lost ideal its return journey ultimately bore it, is the fact (embodying, surely, one of the ironies of history) that the initial impulse to return came, not from within Nonconformity itself, but from within the Established Church. Nonconformity's downward progress, we have seen, had brought it to religious decay—to that religious decay into which the Church of England had also dropped ; and it is with a renewal of religion that we should expect its progress upward and back to start. It was, as a matter of history, with such a renewal of religion that its progress upward and backward did begin ; but it was from a renewal of religion within the Establishment—from the

movement known as the Evangelical Revival—that Nonconformity's own renewal of religion was caught. And it is at this renewal of religion within the Establishment that we have therefore first of all to look.

To call the Evangelical Revival—in both the more and the less enthusiastic or aggressive sections of it between which we shall have to discriminate—the resurrection of Puritanism within the Established Church is to bestow upon it just the name it merits. Like the older Puritanism connected with the names of Laurence Humphrey and Thomas Sampson,[1] the Evangelical Revival was essentially a protest of the Nonconformist spirit, and a protest which did not fully recognise itself for what it was nor discern the implications it contained. Once again insistence on organisation—and insistence on organisation, having been pushed to its utmost in the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity of 1662 and maintained at its utmost ever since, had now had ample opportunity of showing what its effects must be—had failed to bring about depth, warmth, or fulness of religious life; and once again the Nonconformist spirit—exalting life above organisation, declaring that only by means of such an exaltation could life be secured, since organisation cannot *make* life, but can only *react* upon it after it has itself been *made by* life—strove to break through organisation's adamantine wall. As we attempt to see our way into Wesley's somewhat complicated nature, into Whitefield's simpler but equally passionate soul, and into the intense and fiery evangelistic zeal whereby both were possessed, we shall find abundant reason to conclude that, though neither of them knew it or would have formulated it so—though they might even have started up against and repudiated the idea had it been set before them—it was really the Nonconformist spirit which was striving to make them, as it had striven to make Humphrey and Sampson many years before, the agents of its power and will.

Of course the working out, the final issue, of the matter was different at this the second stage. For the circumstances were different. In one way, the situation was more clearly defined for the new Puritans than it had been for the old:

[1] Vol. I. pp. 219 ff., 267-269.

men like Humphrey and Sampson had seen vital religion, as they thought, in danger of dying, while Wesley and his coadjutors saw vital religion practically dead; and the problem for the later men was not, as it had been for their predecessors, to deal with such things as vestments and ceremonies, wherein they held a *threat* against vital religion to be ambushed, but to find a remedy for the accomplished *fact* of religion's death. Perhaps (to turn aside for a moment) this made it all the more difficult for the new Puritans to realise the true nature of the spirit which was seeking to use them for its ends. For it had been actually from a question of conformity that the earlier men had set out, while the later men were not in such direct contact with any problem of the kind. The consequences in the way of religious decay which insistence on conformity had brought about themselves bulked so largely that their origin in insistence on conformity did not suggest itself to thought. And if the older Puritans —directly confronting the dangers which insistence on conformity might bring—did not work down to the fundamental ideas of the Nonconformist spirit, it is less surprising that the newer Puritans should also fail. But that is by the way. It is the results of the changed conditions on the larger historic scale that we are dealing with just now. To repeat, therefore—while the older men dealt with a *threat* to religion hidden in vestments and ceremonies and the like, the newer men had to find a remedy for the accomplished *fact* of religion's death. Hence the appeal of the later men—at any rate of the more ardent section among them—and of their work was more directly evangelistic: hence, too, it was made more directly to the crowd, as an evangelistic appeal must by its very nature be made. And through this last-named difference the final issue of the whole thing was different too. This second energising of the Nonconformist spirit did indeed fail, as the first had failed, to vindicate for itself a permanent place in that Established Church within whose borders it appeared (the small qualification which this statement requires in respect of the "Evangelicals," as distinguished from the "Methodists," will be made in due place[1]); and the dominance of organisation still proved too

[1] See *infra*, pp. 239-242.

great a dead-weight for the new power to lift. But the older Puritanism, in its failure, could only accept notice to quit and obediently go, thereafter to die ineffectually away: if it survived at all, it could only, by reason of the nebulousness of its self-understanding, do so on clear fields abroad where in the absence of pressure there was little need for that nebulousness to correct itself, or in a sort of diffused existence among the less nebulous, the more definitely-programmed, Nonconformist bodies at home. After its expulsion, there was no next compulsory constructive step. With the Puritanism of the eighteenth century the case was not so. The new Puritanism also, as has been said, failed to comprehend itself and its implications, and indulged the vain hope of carrying out the behests of the Nonconformist spirit—not however recognising them to be such—within the Conformist pale; and like the older Puritanism, it had to take exile for its doom. But although in a certain nebulousness of self-appreciation the second movement was like the one that had come and passed away long before, its special circumstances, the particular line it followed, saved it, notwithstanding its failure to maintain itself where it sought to stay, from the ultimate ineffectiveness which the older movement could not escape. Eighteenth-century Puritanism made a directly evangelistic appeal: necessarily, therefore, it was to the crowd the appeal went forth and it was the crowd the appeal drew and won and kept: necessarily, therefore, when eighteenth-century Puritanism was compelled to leave the Established Church's lines it found itself with the crowd upon its hands; and necessarily, therefore, there *was* in this case a next compulsory constructive step, the providing of the crowd with that whereof expulsion had deprived it—which is to say that the movement had at last to issue in the making of a Church. To this issue the movement—however much against the first intention of those who had initiated and sought to guide it—had to come, and came.

But recognition of these differences between the working of the earlier Puritanism and that of the later, and between the ultimate issue of the two, does not prevent recognition of the fact that in essence both earlier and later were manifestations and protests of the Nonconformist spirit,

unrecognised as such by the men whom that spirit sought to sway. The Evangelical Revival, like the Puritanism of Humphrey and Sampson, showed life protesting against organisation's too exclusive and too arrogant rule. And this the story of the Revival will show.

In the present section we follow the story to the year 1787—a convenient limit to fix, inasmuch as in that year occurred the final and decisive separation of the new Puritanism from the Established Church by Wesley's determination to secure licences for all the preachers and all the places of worship under his control.[1] By a coincidence, also, it was in that year that Nonconformity in general—having taken its first step up from the depths by drinking in new streams of religious life drawn largely from Methodist springs—began its second step in the same direction by a renewed agitation for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.[2] The course naturally suggested is to treat in this section of the Revival within the Establishment up to the date named, to deal in the next with the Revival in the older Nonconformist bodies as brought about or affected by the Revival within the Church, and then (after a brief parenthesis which will detain us only a very little while) to pass on to note the further progress which Nonconformity in general made back to its old ideals.

Allusion has been made to a necessary distinction between two sections of that revived Puritanism with which we are dealing—one section being less enthusiastic and aggressive than the other—the first also being the germ of those "Evangelicals" who remained within the Church of England, while the other produced the men who, though themselves remaining within the Church, in their turn ultimately gave birth to "Methodism" without—but both alike being born of the unrecognised Nonconformist spirit pressing its claims. It is with the second section, so much the larger both in bulk and results as it was, that it is well to make our story start; and it hardly needs stating, except for merely formal reasons, that it was at Oxford the activity of this section—or, rather, the preparation for its activity—began, and that Charles and John Wesley were the inspiration and the guides of the

[1] *Infra*, p. 230. [2] See Book IV. Chap. II.

Oxford "Holy Club."[1] It is in the order given the two names have to stand; for although John Wesley was destined to be the great leader of Methodism, it was during his temporary absence from the University (doing duty as his father's curate at Epworth) that his brother Charles felt that sudden rush of a new spirit which was to bring such large and wonderful results. (John, it should be said, had been elected a Fellow of Lincoln College in 1726, in which same year Charles became a Christ Church student, and it was in 1727 that John's temporary absence at Epworth occurred.) But although it was by Charles that Oxford Methodism was founded, John had well deserved the name of "Methodist" before there was any "Holy" or "Methodist" club. In preparing for holy orders, this young man—having previously been so light-hearted and gay that "Who could be dull where Jack Wesley is?" became one of the stock sayings of Christ Church where John's Oxford career, like his brother's, began—had suddenly struck into such paths of seriousness, not to say asceticism, as to allot some special subject of study to every hour of every day, to mark off times for eating and sleeping with mathematical precision, absolutely to refuse conformity to fashion in the matter of apparel and the like, to subject himself to rigorous and regular fastings and meditations and prayers. So that what Charles and his associates, in their founding of the Oxford community, really did was to take a leaf from the absent brother's book. The designation of "Methodist"—as well as more distinctly derogatory titles like "Supererogation men," "Sacramentarians," "Bible Moths" and "Bible Bigots"—had already been fastened by the University scoffers upon the little band; and by carefully observing stated times for partaking of the Communion, by systematic study of religion and theology, by twice-a-week fastings, and in many other ways, its members well earned the name. The designation itself was by no means new. It had been borne by the members of a certain college of physicians at Rome,[2] and, rather

[1] It has not seemed necessary to give authorities for the principal facts in the lives of the Wesleys or the other prominent leaders. They may be found without difficulty in the sources mentioned at the beginning of the section.

[2] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley* (ed. 1870), i. 67.

oddly, by a set of Roman Catholic controversialists;[1] indeed, one finds the term emerging in England so far back as 1639, being then used as a stone to be flung by an irate preacher at "our Anabaptists and pike-staff Methodists, who esteem all flowers of rhetoric in sermons as no better than stinking weeds."[2] "Methodists," in the literal meaning of the term, these Oxford students certainly were; and one can well imagine how John Wesley rejoiced when he found on his return that so large a portion of his own passion for system and order (one of the dominating factors in his career as this was throughout to be) was now upon his brother and friends. Naturally, the leadership of the society passed into his hands. In this business of organisation, "method," he was a genius where the others were but prentice hands, or, one may say, a professional where the rest were but amateur. Moreover, Wesley's own religious position at this time would make him fling himself to the very forefront of a movement having such promise as this Oxford movement seemed to possess. William Law's *Christian Perfection* and the same writer's *Serious Call to a Devout Life*, following with Wesley upon much study of the *Imitation of Christ* and other books pointing more or less straight along the mystical way, had gripped him hard. For many years—even through that time when the students of Christ Church had looked upon him as their leader in vivacious gaiety—Wesley had been dissatisfied with what he was, straining after something far away, seeking for holiness as the highest good. From the days when, as a scholar at Charterhouse, he had felt the hope and desire of "salvation" burning as a strong fire within his soul—though he had then been so far from the evangelicalism he was afterwards to preach as to rest his hope upon not being so bad as other people, upon having "still a kindness for religion," and upon going to Church and saying his prayers[3]—he had pursued the quest, and knew still that he had not attained. In the fulness of communion with the divine life whereof Law and

[1] Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, iii. 242.
[2] Spencer, *Things New and Old*, p. 161.
[3] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley* (ed. 1870), i. 21, 22; Wesley's *Journal* (ed. Curnock), i. 466.

other mystical writers spoke with such sweet familiarity, in new conceptions of the divine indwelling presence and the holiness which that indwelling must necessarily bring, Wesley thought—and not wrongly—that he had caught sight of the goal. But then to see the goal and to reach it were two very different things. And for reaching it—since mysticism without a distinct evangelicalism had no full or complete message for Wesley, as it can have no full or complete message for any human soul—Wesley fell back, naturally enough, upon that element in his own character which rated organisation and "method" so highly, and sought by stricter attention to these to find his way. It must be remembered also that he was at this time a High Churchman—not in the modern and ritualistic sense, but in that which it had borne in the period of Queen Anne[1]—and so remained for some years to come, though there is clear evidence that by 1746 he could be no more so termed. What wonder that, with the "goal" in sight, and left to discover for himself the method of reaching it, Wesley should adopt as his chosen method an intensified practice of the fastings, prayers, and other religious self-disciplines he had already tried? By and by (if we may point somewhat forward) he was to find that the secret was not in these. And his subsequent breaking away from mysticism was due to his realisation of the fact that mysticism had doubly betrayed him—first by itself failing to prescribe a true way to the spiritual goal which it displayed, and second by driving him, in that absence of guidance, into a way so slanting or circuitous that it was little better than none. His renunciation of mysticism was indeed only partial. His utterances about it show an apparent inconsistency; for if at one time he declares that "all the other enemies of Christianity are trifles," and that "the mystics are the most dangerous," he says at another that "there are excellent things in most of the mystic writers";[2] and we know that he published extracts from the writings of Law for his own followers' reading, and used the *Serious Call* as a text-book

[1] *Supra*, p. 143.

[2] On Wesley's relation with mysticism, see Workman, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 53-62; also Brigden, *ibid.* i. 182, 183, 185-188.

at his Kingswood school. Besides, a mystical element—as witness the doctrine of "Holiness" and of "Christian perfection," a doctrine whose presence indicates that salvation by faith never came to mean for Wesley, as for a perverted evangelicalism it has sometimes come to mean, an external arrangement on God's part accepted by an intellectual act on man's, and a doctrine which indicates also that an actual "partaking of God's life" was always essential to Wesley's thought—a mystical element remained in Wesley's system throughout. The explanation of the matter — over and above the fact that Wesley's later condemnation of mysticism refers rather to mysticism of the extreme order, with its doctrines of "quietism" and kindred ideas which seemed, if they did not actually deny the truths of the evangelical Gospel, at least to render them of no account—lies here. Mysticism had shown Wesley an ideal, but had supplied him with no dynamic; and neither for the satisfaction of his own spiritual desires, nor for the satisfaction of his passion to save the souls of men, was this enough. And since mysticism, itself without the suggestion of the true dynamic, had in his own past days left him to fall a prey to a wrong suggestion of dynamic, it might do so for others—and there was danger there. So mysticism had, in the light of Wesley's own experience and for the purposes which ruled Wesley's lifework, to be renounced; or at the most it was but a guarded praise it could win. One can only regret that the thing worked itself out thus; for had mysticism and evangelicalism appeared *together* upon Wesley's horizon, and commended themselves as co-ordinate parts of one scheme—the one as the glorious aim, the other as the equally glorious means—Wesley would have been near to settling down upon the foundation idea whereon the Nonconformist spirit seeks to build, the idea that it is with an indwelling of the divine life in man, brought about through faith's self-identification with the divine life in Christ, that all the processes both of religious life and of Church-construction ought to begin; while at the same time the passion for method and rule by which he was possessed would have made him realise that out of faith-produced divine indwelling organisation *must* come. So the instinct

which led Wesley to emphasise organisation and method so strongly would, while still having its great work to do, have been duly regulated, subordinated, controlled. So (if one may look still further on) the organisation resulting from Wesley's work, while as great and wonderful as that which was actually framed (perhaps to the outward eye in all essential features the same) would have been not so much *imposed upon* as naturally *grown from* the inner life to which Wesley's evangelicalism gave rise—or, to put it another way, it would have been not so much created to serve Wesley's evangelicalism as developed from that evangelicalism at one remove, with the formative inner life between—thus, of course, through its issue from that inner life and its reaction upon it, being all the more fitted to serve the evangelicalism lying behind them both. So Methodism would have been what we still wait for—a Church in which the Nonconformist spirit really had its way. And so, reverting to Wesley himself, we should not have had what as a matter of fact we have in him—one of the strongest protests the Nonconformist spirit has ever made hampered by being made through one of the most strongly Conformist natures it has ever sought to seize. But all this to raise up one more of the many "might-have-beens" which all through the history of the Nonconformist spirit and its concrete manifestations allure us so often; and it has taken us, besides, though on a quite legitimate excursion, rather far from our immediate road. Turning to the record of events in connection with the Oxford "Holy Club," we have John Wesley returning to the University after his brief absence at Epworth, finding the community of "Methodist" young men established there, and—having himself, in addition to the fitness with which his natural bent for "method" endowed him, a special readiness for the occasion since the new vision of the spiritual Promised Land given him by mysticism had added new intensity to an inspiration already so intense—taking the leadership of the band. In other words, we have the rather curious spectacle of Wesley and his fellows throwing themselves, just because the Nonconformist spirit was strongly pressing them, into the most rigidly Conformist ways.

It was out of this "Holy Club" that the protagonists of

the great Puritan revival, on its more enthusiastic side, started on their course. It must not be taken, however, that all its members ultimately attached themselves to aggressive Revivalism: indeed, it is a very varied range of destinies that we find them fulfilling in the end. John Clayton became a Jacobite and Non-Juror,[1] and had ceaseless troubles with the authorities of both Church and State. Gambold and Ingham joined the Moravians[2]—the second to find after a time disturbance rather than peace in his new association, to become the founder of a small religious fellowship in his turn, and still later to forsake even this.[3] And among the Oxford circle were found men (perhaps of these James Hervey, the author of *Meditations among the Tombs*, bears the best-known name) who represented the "less" rather than the "more" aggressive side of the new Puritanism, identifying themselves at last, not with the movement of those "Evangelical Revivalists" who were to be driven outside the Established Church, but with that other movement of "Evangelicalism" which was to be confined within the Established Church's borders and which—though undoubtedly owing much of its vitality to the more vigorous "Revivalism"—can scarcely be said to have been derived from it, but must rather be looked upon as a companion or sister stream flowing from the same original spring. These instances will be enough to show that the "Holy Club" had more types than one represented in its ranks. But the fact that the Wesleys and Whitefield belonged to it puts other facts about it into the background of one's thought. Whitefield, indeed, did not join till 1733. It was not till 1732 that he came up to Oxford; and then he came only as a "servitor," that is, as one who had to meet his college charges by menial service to his fellow-students; for he was the son of a Gloucester innkeeper, and only in this way could a University career be brought within his reach. Necessarily, he stood on a lower social platform than the Wesleys; but his wistful watching of the members of the "Holy Club," and his refusal to join in the abuse or ridicule with which it was assailed, drew Wesley's notice; and

[1] Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists*, pp. 24-56.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 57-200.
[3] See *infra*, pp. 282, 283.

presently, with an invitation to breakfast with Wesley, the life-long friendship began. The "Club," however, had by this time nearly run its course. Inevitably, the comings and goings of University life, the constant changes in *personnel*, told upon it. Moreover, very soon after Whitefield had been enrolled, John Wesley was compelled to go home to Epworth to assist his father through the parochial labours of the old man's last two years: when he came back to Oxford in 1735, it was only to start with his brother on missionary work to Georgia almost at once; and in the absence of its head, the fellowship declined in numbers and somewhat flagged in zeal. Whitefield's fervour might have done much to compensate for the disadvantage of Wesley's empty place; but the very ardour with which Whitefield had embraced the Society's programme and sought to fulfil its perfect law had ended in illness, so that Whitefield too quitted Oxford for a space. The oversight of the Club, after he returned to find the Wesleys gone abroad, dropped naturally into Whitefield's hands. But its great days were over; and with Whitefield's ordination in 1736, and with Whitefield's step into a larger world of service, its history—though probably not its influence even so far as Oxford itself is concerned[1]—may be reckoned as done. It had known but a comparatively brief life by the count of years. But a society which once had John and Charles Wesley and Whitefield upon its roll must always keep for the world's eyes a shining lustre in every letter of its name.

It has already been remarked that with Whitefield's ordination, and with the wonderful sermon which was said to have "driven fifteen people mad," the Evangelical Revival actually began.[2] The Wesleys were away in Georgia; so that, though John Wesley came presently to be the greater figure, and remains so for history's eye, Whitefield takes precedence as to initiative and time. Whitefield was before Wesley, also, in another experience without which the Revival could not have been. Shortly after Easter 1735, some little time before his ordination,[3] he had lit upon the

[1] On this see *The New History of Methodism*, i. 158.

[2] *Supra*, p. 175.

[3] Not *after* his ordination, as Stoughton puts it (*History of Religion in England*, ed. 1881, vi. 125).

spiritual secret for which he had yearned. The austerities of the Oxford programme had witnessed to the intensity of his longing, but to satisfy it had been beyond their power. Suddenly there came to Whitefield a revelation kindred with that which had come to Luther long before; and union and reconciliation with God through faith in Christ came to be simultaneously true for his intellect and real for his inner life. "I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me. The spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour."[1] Then broke out the first outbursts of that marvellous eloquence which swayed multitudes, melted the hard-hearted, clove a way for its message to the hearts of the poor and ignorant and struck the scoffers nearly always into silence and oft-times into something better still; and then there flamed up in Whitefield's soul that passion for evangelising which would not let him settle either in the academic atmosphere of Oxford or in the curacy of a country parish—though he tried both[2]—but forced him to compass sea and land in order to win men to a faith like his own. For a few months he held thronging crowds spell-bound in London, Bristol, and elsewhere—though already the clerical criticism which was to be poured so abundantly upon all "enthusiasm" during many years to come had unstopped its first vials of sarcasm and reproach. Then came a break, for Georgia had called to Whitefield as it had called to the Wesleys; and in December 1737 he sailed. Less than a year, however, saw him back again—not that he had any intention of staying, but that he wished to collect funds for the orphan hospital which he had resolved to establish abroad, and then to return with them to his post as the Anglican clergyman at Savannah. But although he did return to Georgia in August of 1739, the idea of settling down there had already been given up; and for the rest of his life Whitefield was the itinerant evangelist of two worlds, speeding backwards and forwards between England and America in a fashion wonderful in those days when travel was so difficult and slow, because he recognised that in such an evangelist's work his

[1] Whitefield's *Journal* (ed. Wale), p. 48; Tyerman, *Life of Whitefield*, i. 25.

[2] The curacy was at Dummer in Hampshire.

true function lay. The great events which followed upon his arrival in England in 1738 had been as strokes upon strokes of a pencil of light drawing for him his appointed line. Once again there were the eager crowds: then came the shutting of pulpits and church doors against him by clergymen whose sense of religious decency was so keen that it could not bear the shock of seeing souls converted in ways like this: then came Whitefield's strengthening resolve, finding a tonic in the criticism which was meant to kill it, that he would not be denied; and at last came the idea of a church which could not be closed and of a pulpit which could not be guarded against him—the unwalled church with the skies for roof, the pulpit of some dominating hillock or mound. And at last, in the spring of 1739, he stood for his first service in the open air before two hundred Kingswood colliers near Bristol—for his second before two thousand—before twenty thousand ere long. Whitefield had taken what seemed to Bishop Gibson of London the dreadful step of "inviting the rabble to hear him";[1] and the new Puritanism had become aggressive indeed.

It was the miracle of Whitefield's successful work with the Kingswood colliers that stirred John Wesley to emulation. In the early stages both of spiritual experience and of spiritual work he was a few steps behind, though he followed fast. We saw him departing for Georgia in 1735; but his work there—which we need not survey in any detail—had many elements of unsatisfactoriness; and February 1738 saw him home again, his homeward journey having crossed the outward one which Whitefield made. (Charles had returned in temporarily broken health nearly eighteen months before, having been only six months on foreign ground.) The importance of John Wesley's sojourn in Georgia lies in the introduction to the Moravians which it brought about, in the conversations he had with Spangenberg, the Moravian pastor at Savannah, and in the influence these had upon Wesley's religious development—an influence so marked that, if it did not actually bring Wesley to the final stage of peace, he professes himself to have had, during the

[1] *Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a certain Sect, etc.* (ed. 1744), p. 4.

time of its continuance, "foretastes of the comforts of the gospel" which were "indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith."[1] For Wesley, like Whitefield, had discovered that all the exercises of the Oxford "Holy Club," valuable as they were, and true testimony as they bore to the aspiration of his heart, were rather an expenditure of spiritual force than a receiving of grace, and left so much that was really essential wanting still. The Moravian influences of Georgia set him on the track at whose end the goal stood waiting for the spiritual traveller to come. Under the impression of them Wesley, almost immediately after his arrival in England, sought the Moravians out again. Of the Moravian advent upon our shores we shall presently have to speak:[2] here we need only note that among the Moravians domiciled in England was one man, Peter Böhler, to whom Wesley was to owe a great debt. Spangenberg in Georgia had enquired of Wesley whether he "knew Jesus Christ": Böhler in London enquired whether Wesley "had faith";[3] and the two questions, as he meditated upon them, gradually drew Wesley nearer and nearer to that idea of union and reconciliation with God through faith in Christ which Whitefield had reached with less travail of spirit three years before. The Moravians were the last of Wesley's schoolmasters to bring him to Christ. He was to break to some extent with them later on as he was already breaking with mysticism—and for much the same reason. For certain of the Moravians pushed the doctrine of justification by faith so far as to depreciate the value of prayer and Scripture for any who had not passed through the veritable saving experience, and to count those external activities in which, by almost common consent, inward righteousness ought to manifest itself as of comparatively trifling importance or worth—thus giving entrance from a fresh quarter to the danger for which mysticism had already provided a door. But in the case of Moravianism, as in the case of mysticism, it was with the excess, not with the essence, of the thing that Wesley broke; and the evangelicalism suggested by the Moravians, like the

[1] Wesley's *Journal* (ed. Curnock), i. 470. [2] See *infra*, pp. 279-281.
[3] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley* (ed. 1870), i. 125; Wesley's *Journal* (ed. Curnock), i. 436, 440, 442, etc.

"vital union with God" suggested by mysticism, remained an integral part of Wesley's system to the end. And certainly, whatever the future was to bring, it was from the Moravians that Wesley's final lesson was learnt. Even with Böhler at his side, however, Wesley could not immediately find his way. For weeks there was much searching of heart, much wrestling, much walking under unresponsive heavens; but Wesley, heavy-laden as he was, acted on Böhler's advice that he should "preach faith until he had it": he seized opportunity upon opportunity of talking to fellow-travellers in the stage-coach or upon the road about the salvation he did not feel himself to possess; and at last the fightings and the fears were done. On May 24, 1738, Wesley attended a meeting held at Aldersgate Street in connection with one of the "religious societies" of the Church of England (one notes with interest how the links between these "societies" and the Revival movement show themselves now and again), heard some one reading Luther's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* there, and as he listened, found the result of all the counsels, warnings, and impressions of the bygone months crystallising into the act of faith which as yet he had never been able to perform. "I felt my heart strangely warmed,"[1] he says, and no wonder. All this is the kind of thing at which the man of the world will smile; but, having regard to Wesley's future and Wesley's work, no one can question Lecky's dictum that "an Epoch in English History" is marked by that 24th of May.[2] (We may note that Wesley's brother Charles, whose course had been not dissimilar to Wesley's own, and who also had sat at Peter Böhler's feet, had reached his sure spiritual ground a few days before.) For the moment, however, it was only Wesley's personal problem that was solved. He had overtaken Whitefield's personal experience, not as yet Whitefield's method of work. But that overtaking was speedily to come. At first, as he heard in 1739 of what Whitefield was doing at Kingswood, he shook his head. The passion for order and conformity to rule, the passion which he never lost and which could not in any single instance

[1] Wesley's *Journal* (ed. Curnock), i. 476.
[2] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), iii. 48.

yield without a protest and a pang—not to speak of the ecclesiasticism which clung around him still—were both severely tried by such startling originality of procedure as this; and to a man whose natural bent it was almost to think even the saving of souls a sin unless it were done in church,[1] open-air preaching must indeed have seemed a highly indecorous thing. But strong as was the passion for order and conformity to rule, the passion for spiritual success and for all that could induce it was stronger—here too the Wesley of the beginning foreshadowed the Wesley of all the after-days—and though the protest pushed up and the pang pricked, they could not have their way if sufficient cause against them were shown. Sufficient cause was here. Wesley saw how at Kingswood drunkenness and uncleanness were giving place to decency, how praises to God and Christ were heard instead of the old resounding oaths, how the former things had passed away; and one day, after hearing Whitefield preach, Wesley's own die was cast. If he had any lingering doubt, it disappeared that same evening, when, addressing a meeting on the Sermon on the Mount, it suddenly struck him that here was a sound precedent for the field-preaching at which he had been inclined to carp. So the next day, in his own words—words whose ring shows how much reluctance Wesley had beaten down—"I submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground near the city to about three thousand people."[2] (The farther end of St. Philip's Plain, Bristol, is the historic spot.) Thus at last John Wesley had reached the place where Whitefield stood; and thus the ranks of the new aggressive Puritanism had obtained their strongest recruit—or rather, the General who was to be their leader and commander for many a long year.

The two most commanding figures of the Evangelical Revival stand before us, accordingly, at the beginning of their work. Evangelistic passion throbbed hotly in both; and of Whitefield it may be said that it was of evangelistic passion, and of this alone, that he was made. Of a less

[1] Wesley's *Journal* (ed. Curnock), ii. 167.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 172, 173.

complicated nature than Wesley, he troubled himself little or nothing about what his labours were to lead to so far as organisation was concerned: it was his business to know nothing among men but Jesus Christ and Him crucified: no question as to the relations between his converts and the existing Churches vexed his mind: neither theologically nor ecclesiastically were there any contending influences or cross-currents at work within him. Such matters as theological system and ecclesiastical order were left to settle themselves for his converts as they would. With Wesley things stood differently. He was as ardently evangelistic as Whitefield. But the mingling of mysticism with evangelicalism in both his experience and his thought prevented him from being theologically so simple, or rather so non-theological, as Whitefield was; and his love for order and organisation, his innate "methodism," was one of the most powerful forces in the shaping of his career. It worked, as we shall see, in two diametrically opposite ways; for it made him cling to the ecclesiastical organisation—the Church of England—with which he had been identified from his youth, and at the same time compelled him, since the Church of England for the most part looked askance upon him and his evangelistic crusade, to set up an organisation for the sake and for the benefit of his converts outside the Church of England itself. But when in 1739 the wonderful ministry began, all these things, though the unfolding scroll was soon to show them, were hidden from both Wesley's and Whitefield's eyes.

For fifty years, till far into the reign of George the Third,[1] Wesley's itinerant ministry—Charles Wesley being his brother's faithful helper and proving himself one of the great evangelical hymnists of the world besides—went on. Great events—the conquest of Canada and the achievement of independence by the United States among them—had taken place by the time Wesley went to his rest; but any historian of truly sensitive ear will catch the forward steps of Wesley's work sounding clear among all the other steps he hears as the great events go marching by. To any historian, indeed, the desire to tell the wonderful story

[1] George the Second, 1727–1760; George the Third, 1760–1820.

with something of detail becomes almost irresistible; and though the desire must here be restrained, it must at least be said that for all impartial observers it is a wonderful story indeed—surely one of the most wonderful in all the world. More than two hundred and fifty thousand miles Wesley is held to have travelled.[1] His average number of sermons was fifteen a week. He was often preaching—to good audiences, too—at five o'clock in the morning. The sight of a city's wickedness did but move him to say, "Surely this place is ripe for God!" Discomforts of every kind had to be faced. Moreover, Wesley was in frequent danger; for spite of his marvellous power of swaying a hostile mob, there were often critical moments, before that power had time to come into play, when wounds or death might easily have become the preacher's fate. In one place, the cry of "Crucify him!" was actually raised against Wesley by the devil-ridden crowd. The very magistrates sometimes looked upon him and his helpers as "disturbers of the peace." But Wesley was equal to every occasion. Repeatedly the bully was cowed: repeatedly the soft answer—or sometimes the answer touched with humorous satire—turned away wrath: even the fashionable fop found that the preacher was more than his match.[2] The power of commanding attention and fixing the minds of his hearers receptively and submissively upon himself Wesley possessed in remarkable degree. "I was like a wandering bird," writes John Nelson, "cast out of the nest, till Mr. John Wesley came to preach his first sermon at Moorfields. Oh, that was a blessed morning to my soul! As soon as he got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair, and turned his face towards where I stood, and I thought fixed his eyes upon me. . . . When he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me. When he had done, I said, 'This man can tell the secrets of my heart: he hath not left me there; for he hath showed the remedy, even the blood of Jesus.'"[3] Such incidents as this were the common-

[1] For this aspect of Wesley's work, consult specially Richard Green, *John Wesley, Evangelist.*

[2] See the well-known account of John Wesley's encounter with Beau Nash in Tyerman's *Life of Wesley* (ed. 1870), i. 237.

[3] *The Journal of Mr. John Nelson*, pp. 13, 14.

places of Wesley's career. Philanthropy, it must also be noted, went hand in hand with evangelism. That spirit of social service whose spread John Richard Green rightly remarks as one of the outstanding results of the Evangelical Revival [1] was hot in Wesley himself. Visitation of the parishes had been one of the works of the "Holy Club": such questions as that of the unemployed claimed Wesley's personal and practical care all through; and when he was eighty-two Wesley spent whole days tramping to and fro collecting for the poor. And thus the toil of many kinds went on till extreme age brought feebleness of the physical frame, though it brought no feebleness to mind or heart. Towards the end, Wesley had to be helped into the pulpit; but silent he could not be. Somewhat like a saint of earlier centuries, he whispered "Little children, love one another," as he passed strangers upon the street. And on March 2, 1791 (if we may for a moment look across the date-limit within which this section is kept), he ended, with "The best of all is, God is with us," for his last words before the final word "Farewell."

Of course Wesley's very success in winning converts would have compelled him, even had he been unwilling, to face the question of organising them for the purpose of fellowship in spiritual things. But he needed no compulsion; for, as we have seen, love of organisation and conviction of its importance were in his blood. It is important also to notice that this same care for organisation and conformity thereto made Wesley the autocrat of the societies he formed. He could not, being what he was, leave them to develop their own system as might seem good to them; nor could he be content with mere suggestion or advice. Had he done either of these things, the regularity and conformity on which it was his nature to lay such stress would have been impaired; and a still more serious danger was that unconsidered hastiness, short-sighted experiments (as Wesley would have considered them) might antagonise the Established Church within which, or at least in harmony and alliance with which, Wesley wished his entire system to be retained. The

[1] *History of the English People*, iv. 150.

"method" of organisation was therefore strictly prescribed, its limits strictly drawn. One may perhaps put it that while things clearly seen to be necessary were established, no more than the absolutely necessary things were set up. But these absolutely necessary things multiplied fast.[1] To form converts into societies was the first indispensable step—societies which, though Wesley did not claim, or rather did not allow, that they formed anything like a Church separated from the Church of England, were composed of men and women whose Christian experience had been formed and was being sustained by the special evangelistic doctrines which Wesley preached. This was obviously needful if Wesley's converts were not only to start well, but to run the good course to the end. These societies, to some extent modelled upon the "religious societies" already in existence, had their beginning, according to Wesley, at the end of 1739.[2] But the model was infinitely improved upon when Wesley took it over. The Societies soon had their inner companies of "Bands" or "Select Bands," whose members spoke together in confidential intimacy concerning the spiritual secrets of their hearts: apart from this internal division, every Society was also divided into "classes," each of twelve persons or more with a "leader who received the contributions of the members and served as sub-pastor":[3] watch-night services, covenant meetings, and other aids to the maintenance of vital religion and its spread among those who did not possess it, were put upon the Methodist programme; so that in these and many other ways the fires were fed, and the Methodist organisation framed much as it continues to-day. Along other lines, too, large developments supervened. The multitude of associates, the wide geographical area over which they were spread, necessitated the institution of an order of lay preachers who—always under Wesley's own close supervision—seconded and continued Wesley's work: by and by it became essential that some of these should "itinerate" as Wesley did in order that the whole wide

[1] See the chapter (by George Eayrs) on "Developments, Institutions, Opposition, Helpers," in the *New History of Methodism*, i. 279 ff.

[2] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley* (ed. 1870), i. 278.

[3] Eayrs, *New History of Methodism*, i. 287.

field of service should be ploughed and sown; and thus the "circuit-system" emerged. Moreover, the multiplication of Societies called for buildings in which they might meet. So early as 1739 the Foundery in Moorfields, London (its name derived from the fact that cannon had been cast there in former days) was secured for Methodist use; and thereafter Methodist building went on with speed. A "Conference"—annual thenceforward—met in 1744, consisting of Wesley himself and six clergymen, together with four lay preachers specially invited to assist; a body being thus constituted into whose hands the arrangement of Methodist preachers' circuits, the control of Methodist buildings, services, and finance, and the settlement of all other Methodist affairs, naturally fell. "In five years, therefore," as one historian truly remarks, "all characteristic features of Methodism had been developed."[1] It was all the product of Wesley's brain, imposed upon the Societies by Wesley's will, and controlled—with wonderfully little friction when all the circumstances are considered—by Wesley's authority so long as Wesley lived. This, however, makes it from one point of view all the more wonderful an achievement; and as we remember that the entire Methodist structure, from base to coping-stone, was the work of one man, we cannot but survey it with admiration and almost with awe, even though we have to admit that it stands as the outcome of the Nonconformist spirit working within and through a predominantly Conformist mind.

That it was the outcome of these conditions becomes abundantly clear when we pass on to consider the relation of Methodism, as Wesley organised it, with the Established Church.[2] The question of this relation was of course present and pressing all through; and every fresh step in the forming of his system was taken by Wesley with that question in the background of his mind. How essentially Wesley's nature belonged to the Conformist order appears not only in his imposition of the detailed Methodist system

[1] Eayrs, in *New History of Methodism*, i. 309.

[2] Consult on this a very thorough article on "The Churchmanship of John Wesley," in *London Quarterly Review*, xxx. 267 ff.

of class-meetings and the rest upon his converts, but in his desire that this entire system should be looked upon as supplementary to, not divorced from or antagonistic towards, the Church of England, and that membership within the first should involve no break with the second. His evangelical passion certainly modified his conformist ardour to no small extent. With him, conformity—whether to the Methodist system itself or to the Established Church—could not be taken, as the extreme Conformist spirit takes it, for the operative cause of real religion in human hearts: his own experience for that matter, and subsequent meditation upon it, had proved to him all too clearly that conformity had no such dynamic power; and he had far too strong a grip upon the great idea of conversion and upon its kindred ideas to seek for conversion's energising power anywhere else than in holy influences seized upon by faith as they come direct from God. His conformist ardour, accordingly, satisfied itself by making conformity a sort of *concurrent* necessity with the necessity of those inward and spiritual processes whereby vital religion was secured. In respect of his own Methodist system, this meant that although it was imposed with authority, no claim to be divinely-ordained was put forward on its behalf —which is the point at which the superficial likeness between the Methodist system and Presbyterianism, sometimes strongly insisted upon, is seen to be superficial only.[1] And in respect of the Church of England (the matter with which we are immediately concerned) it meant that while the Church of England, being the Church in possession and upon the ground, had the authority which such a situation could give, and while this authority was admittedly great, it had no more. It was, in effect, Hooker's conception over again—that the Church's right to claim the allegiance of men rests, not on a direct divine ordinance, but on a sort of acquired exclusive validity which proved expediency has conferred.[2] But with these qualifications made, it remains true that Wesley's whole bent was in the direction of close adherence to the Established Church,

[1] See Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 583-593.
[2] See Vol. I. pp. 243, 244.

and that every step which seemed to imply separation, or even to hint at it as a remote possibility, was adopted with extreme reluctance and regret. He did not at any time insist that individual members of the Methodist Societies must also become adherents of the Establishment; but he wished that the Societies should be a sort of outer room in a dwelling where the Establishment was the inner. If any chose to use the outer apartment alone, that would be their affair; but Wesley hoped that the passage between outer and inner would be kept always open and, by others as by himself, constantly used. As a description of at any rate Wesley's initial position, the position from which he only deviated under compulsion, and always with longing looks back, it may be said that conformity to the Methodist system *and* conformity to the Established Church were alike precious to Wesley's eyes.

But in practice these two conformities turned out to be inconsistent; and Wesley's life was a slow and reluctantly made discovery of that fact. What rendered it impossible for him to maintain his initial position unmodified was the hostility of the Church as a whole to his entire range of ideas. At this hostility one cannot be particularly surprised; for whatever Wesley might say as to his own desire for harmony, the very setting up of his system (all the more that it was to be set up not outside of, but as an adjunct to, the Establishment) in itself constituted a reproach against the Establishment and a declaration that the Establishment's proper work had been largely left undone; while Wesley's insistence on conversion and faith as the superlative necessities was fundamentally inconsistent with a religious scheme which made baptism and creeds the starting-points, and which was priestly and sacramentarian at heart. In fact, the clergy of the Church detected by a true instinct—what Wesley himself failed to detect—that Methodism was in reality a sign of the Nonconformist spirit's intrusion into their jealously-guarded preserves. From all the clerical ranks, accordingly, the fusillade flashed out.[1] A few clergymen, as we have seen, were present with Wesley at the first Conference; and besides these, there were others—Fletcher

[1] For the Nonconformist attitude to Methodism, see *infra*, pp. 244-246.

of Madeley stands among them with the halo of a saint round his head for ever—who warmly approved, and indeed rendered to the Methodist movement help of various kinds and degrees.[1] But those favourably inclined totalled to a quite insignificant count in the end. Even the "Evangelicals," who ought at least to have recognised that Methodism, putting it at its worst, did but embody a more eager and fiery variety of the spirit whereby they themselves were animated, in many cases frowned and rebuked. And very many used pulpit and press for a scurrilous anti-Methodist campaign, speaking of Wesley and his helpers as if they had been the very scum of the earth, instead of the knights of a holy crusade.[2] The absurd cry that Methodists were Papists in disguise—a cry which in spite of its absurdity, imposed to some extent upon a man like Horace Walpole[3]—was raised again and again.[4] The hostile mobs, bent upon doing Wesley or his preachers some ill, not seldom had the local parish priest at their head. Bishops held up their hands in holy horror at the idea that their dioceses were being invaded by fanatics like these. Pulpit after pulpit was closed to the Wesleys as against men who bore the germs of plague with them in their robes. With opposition at such a height as this all through, the doctrine that Methodism was not meant to carry any separation from the Established Church must have appeared to most men as not far removed from a fiction from the first. Some were quick enough to say so, as when John Berridge—himself a clergyman of the Evangelical school—wrote to the Countess of Huntingdon warning her that both her students and Wesley's preachers could not fail to become "settled Dissenters" by-and-by.[5] But Wesley would not see it except by slow degrees. He was quite pathetically anxious to avoid causes of offence if any way of doing so could be found. His first appointment of lay preachers was very hesitatingly made; and indeed it was

[1] See Eayrs, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 317-321.

[2] See Eayrs, as previous note, i. 324-326; and Green's *Bibliography of Anti-Methodist Publications*.

[3] Walpole's *Letters* (ed. Toynbee, vii. 152).

[4] See Bishop Lavington's *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared*, of which a new edition was published by Polwhele in 1820.

[5] *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, ii. 423.

only his mother's persuasion, and her solemn warning against standing in God's way, that brought him to the point. It was enjoined that Methodist services should not be held during the regular hours of public worship. The first Conference (1744) declared emphatically that separation, if it came, would come only because Methodists were "thrust out": the Conference of 1755, under Wesley's own persuasion, decided again in the same sense; and Wesley himself, of course, remained a loyal member of the Church of England to his life's close. But before that, certain things which, whether or no Wesley recognised it, logically involved separation, had presented themselves as imperative if the future of Methodism was to be secured. For one thing, the question of the Sacrament had forced Wesley's hand in the matter of ordination. His very attachment to the rites and ordinances of the Church made him anxious that his followers should not lose opportunity of participation therein; yet the clergy in many places banished Methodists from the Table of the Lord. There was only one way out; and in 1787, to no inconsiderable extent against his own inclinations, and to a still larger extent against the emphatically expressed views of his brother Charles, Wesley ordained Alexander Mather, Henry Moore, and Thomas Rankin, for service in England, with power to administer the Sacrament there. There had been previous ordinations to a similar ministry for the growing Methodists of America; but an ordination in England (and though Wesley himself did not use the word "ordination," everybody else did, knowing that the thing *was* ordination, neither more or less) was much more significant than any ordination for America could be. For another thing, Wesley in the same year (1787) put his preachers and his buildings under the protection of the Toleration Act, in order to secure Methodist services from interruption and wreck—a thing he had been very reluctant to think of or permit until now, although in one or two instances he had given consent—this being, of course, virtually to affix to both the label of Dissent, since it was for the protection of avowed Dissenters from the Church of England that the Act was drawn, and it was as "dissenting" preachers and buildings they would be described in the

licences they received. In fact, with the ordinations and the registrations under the Toleration Act, Methodism had become a Nonconformist Church. To the end, Wesley would make no explicit declaration to that effect, though he admitted that a "kind of separation" had taken place, and would "inevitably spread, though by slow degrees." Indeed, it was his unwillingness to accept the situation that was the fruitful source of Methodist troubles after he had passed from the scene. The question of the Sacrament was itself one which held possibilities of difficulty and dispute; for though Wesley had ordained preachers himself, he had given no definite sign that he looked upon this as more than a temporary expedient to get over a pressing difficulty; so that after his death his followers had to settle for themselves whether administration of the Sacrament was to be confined to Methodist clergymen and those preachers whom Wesley himself had ordained, or whether they might consider themselves entitled to push further along the road to which Wesley had rather vaguely waved his hand. On this particular question, however—though difficulties and disputes did arise—a way of settlement by compromise was found.[1] But other questions, which would have been decided in advance if Wesley had boldly faced the inevitable issues of the position on which he stood, emerged as a consequence of his hesitancy when he had passed from the scene. For even after the decision on the Sacramental question had appeared to make severance from the Establishment complete, there remained the further problem whether the difference between Methodism and the Establishment was or was not to be as little accentuated as the conditions allowed. Was Methodism to be organised as possessing a special clerical order endowed with special grace and therefore with special and exclusive authority in religious affairs? In other words, was the Church of England model in this respect to be copied or not? Was Methodism, even though cast out, to build for itself a house resembling as nearly as might be the one from which it was expelled? This one problem was to make more than one Methodist division in future years; for very naturally, different disputants, as they faced it, wanted to

[1] *Infra*, pp. 329, 330.

settle it in different ways. If Wesley had not hesitated—if he had spoken the one word which at some time or other, as he must have known, had to be spoken, and had followed it up with the other words for which it called—all this would have been spared. But the truth was that an actual separation between Methodism and the Established Church had already come, and that Wesley had refused to call it by its name or to label it plainly for what it was as it entered the door. So that what we have in the end is Wesley's insistence on conformity defeating itself—or, rather, one of his mutually inconsistent "conformities" defeating the other. Conformity to the Church of England *and* conformity to the Methodist rule were with Wesley equally desirable things; but then in his desire not to impair the first he actually impaired the prospects of the second; for not seeing, in his desire to preserve the first, that the two "conformities" were irreconcileable, and that the first must break down if the second were kept, Wesley made no provision for contingencies with which the break-down of the first would necessarily confront the second, and so left a blank in the table of rules which the second should observe.

For the moment, Methodism as Wesley established and ordered it may now be left, and we may, going back to the point at which we saw the two great Methodist leaders standing together ready for their work, let Whitefield's career and its results take turn in our survey. "Calvinistic Methodism," Methodism of Whitefield's type is generally termed, for Whitefield was—or rather became before he had been long engaged in his evangelistic mission—a Calvinist of the highest school. Of course in his actual preaching to the crowds Calvinism was forgotten; and whatever his views as to election and predestination might be, the Calvinistic Whitefield, like the Arminian Wesley, appealed to his hearers as to men whose final fate depended upon their unconstrained decision, and did so with a directness and fervour great as Wesley's own. A Calvinist, nevertheless, he was. Necessarily, since Wesley bore strongly upon the Arminian side, this drove something of a wedge between the two men. In 1740, indeed, a quarrel arising out of this question grew sharp; though one adds with pleasure that it was immedi-

ately composed again, and that the personal friendship between Wesley and Whitefield kept warm thereafter till the latter's death.[1] The public service of each, however, was driven perforce upon its separate path. In many points—notably in the opposition excited among the authorities of the Church they would fain have quickened to a keener sense of its high calling—the two men's experiences were similar. In many points they are wide apart. Nor is there any need to ask which was the greater man: they tower so high that any little span whereby one may on strict measurement outdistance the other becomes unimportant compared with the immense moral stature which both can claim. Whitefield's mighty oratory, overwhelming the multitudes like a rushing sea—the spiritual qualities which lay behind it—the marvellous personal magnetism which remains a miracle after all possible explanatory formulae have been exhausted—the nobility of character—the courage which was twin with Wesley's, as fiercely tried and as heroically proved in face of many a howling and threatening mob—all these things were so much part and parcel of the man that they spring straight to one's memory still at the mere mention of Whitefield's name. For the rest, the story of his life and work may be briefly told. The greater simplicity of his nature, as compared with that of Wesley, has already been noted—how it was of evangelistic passion, and of that alone, that he was made. His history is such as in the case of a man of the kind we should expect. To preach as he had preached to the Kingswood colliers in 1739 was, he might at any time have said, the "one thing I do." He lifted his voice in every corner of England—he went into Wales to lend help and strength to Howel Harris, the great apostle of religious revival there—he went over and over again to America to repeat the wonderful successes of his work at home. Two buildings—"Tabernacles" in Moorfields and Tottenham Court Road—were erected by 1757 as a sort

[1] The Calvinist-Arminian dispute broke out again just after Whitefield's death between partisans in the two Methodist branches, Toplady—an evangelical clergyman of the Established Church, and author of "Rock of Ages"—joining in on the Calvinist side, and distinguishing himself by the exceptional virulence of his attack. Particulars, which need not be given here, can be seen in Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 373-377.

of headquarter Churches at which, when in the capital, he most frequently preached; and these Whitefield — anticipating Wesley herein since, as we have seen, Wesley did not have all his places of worship registered until 1787— was reluctantly driven to drop down upon a Nonconformist status by having them licensed under the Toleration Act. For though Whitefield remained, as Wesley did, a firmly attached clergyman of the Establishment till his death, he found its pulpits, as Wesley found them, closed against him one by one: he was practically disowned by the Church he would not disown; and although the question of Nonconformity either in himself or in his followers did not come within his field of vision, it was only by registration of his buildings as Nonconformist that he could secure them against outrage and wrong. But no one place—no "Tabernacle," no city, no country—could hold him, or be more than a centre on which he settled down for a brief rest after each wide flight was done. By 1770—twenty-one years before Wesley finally folded his hands—he had worn himself out; and one night death found him when he was in America for the seventh time. Tired and done as he was, he had nevertheless forced himself to speak from the staircase of a house in Newbury Port to the crowd without and within—the people "gazing up at him with tearful eyes, as Elisha at the ascending prophet." "His voice flowed on until the candle which he held in his hand burned away and went out in its socket"—and then, "the next morning he was not, for God had taken him."[1]

Of Whitefield's personal history this is all there is to tell. The historian has not in his case, as he has in that of Wesley, to speak of the building up of a great organisation piece by piece, to relate how one personality gave shape to, built itself into, and afterwards dominated, a whole apparatus of classes, Conferences, and the rest. Whitefield's one business was to bring souls to the point of religious decision: having done this to the utmost of his power in one city, he passed on to another: he was content to be the apostle who planted, leaving the watering to be done by other hands. The problem of shepherding converts was not so acute in

[1] Stevens's *History of Methodism*, i. 383.

Whitefield's case as in Wesley's ; in part because the greater friendliness subsisting between Whitefield and the Nonconformists,[1] as well as Whitefield's Calvinism (the second fact of course giving stronger body to the first), made it easier for those whom Whitefield won to find a permanent spiritual home in the already existing Nonconformist Churches. Nevertheless it had to be faced. And Whitefield, being what he was, could hardly be expected to create any ecclesiastical organisation comparable with the one Wesley reared. Yet even in that direction his labours were not without result. In Wales, indeed, he left upon the reviving religion of his times so strong an impress that "Calvinistic Methodism" became one of the Principality's most prominent varieties of religious life, and so continues to this day. But that is outside our scope. Even in England a number of Churches —they remained so loosely bound together that it would be stretching language too far to look on them as in the full sense a Church—indirectly owed their origin to him. The title by which they have always been and still are known—for though now presided over for the most part by Congregational ministers, they preserve such corporate denominational separateness as they assumed at the beginning—that of "The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion," appropriately indicates both their direct creator and their character. They make a "Connexion" rather than a "Church," being really a number of congregations with no other bond than that implied in the common holding of Church of England doctrine interpreted in an evangelical spirit, and in the common usage of the Church of England prayers. And they make the "Countess of Huntingdon's" Connexion, because it was under the direction and control of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, that they were set each in its place. Undoubtedly the relation of the body to other denominations and its place in the general religious development of the country would have been more immediately conveyed to the observer if the body had borne in England the name it bore and bears in Wales ; for the title "Calvinistic Methodism" suggests at once both a likeness and an unlikeness between those Churches descending from Whitefield

[1] See *infra*, p. 250.

and those whose ancestry is traceable along the Wesley line. Yet it was natural enough, under the circumstances, that English Calvinistic Methodism — the Methodism which Whitefield fathered — should obtain the name it actually won. For the Countess of Huntingdon it was that built the Churches in which Whitefield's type of doctrine prevailed. She was a lady of deep piety ("I wish there was a Lady Huntingdon in every diocese in the kingdom," George the Third once said to an ecclesiastical dignitary who showed himself jealous of the Countess's interference in religious concerns [1]), and bent upon the propagation of vital religion among people of her own rank. Upon the Methodist movement she looked from the beginning with a most favourable eye: she was not even ashamed to avow that she was a Methodist herself; and Wesley and Whitefield, as well as various Nonconformist ministers, to say nothing of those clergymen of the Church of England who, without being in any sense "Methodist," were of evangelical views, were her intimate friends. Being a Calvinist, however, it was to Whitefield that she felt particularly drawn. Whitefield's ministry had not long begun when the Countess invited him to preach in her drawing-room, thus initiating a series of services—often, no doubt, looked on as mere "society functions" by some of those attending, and yet surely bringing the winds of the Spirit to blow upon many who had never felt them before—which lasted, with intermissions rendered necessary by Whitefield's frequent absences from home, for many years to come. By degrees, the association grew closer; till in 1749 Whitefield, perhaps realising that Lady Huntingdon might be able to supply, or at any rate provide for, that "watering" which he left undone, sent to her an impassioned appeal. "A leader is wanting. This, however, has been put before your ladyship by the Great Head of the Church, an honour conferred on few, but an earnest of one to be put upon your Ladyship before men and angels when time shall be no more." [2] The Countess was ready enough to respond. More and more her purse was placed at Whitefield's disposal, her influence at his back.

[1] *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, ii. 282, 283.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 117.

By and by commenced the erection of Churches in various places—Brighton, Bath, Tunbridge Wells, Spa Fields in London, and others—all of them put in trust for the conducting of public worship after the Church of England manner, but all of them open to preachers of every order who struck the truly evangelical note. (It may be mentioned, in passing, that in London there were established certain congregations which, although based upon the same general ideas as those of the Countess's Connexion, were not formally identified with her "Trust." Among these, rather curiously, Whitefield's own chief London preaching-places—the Tabernacles in Moorfields and Tottenham Court Road—are counted. We shall have to refer to them again.[1]) The towns selected by the Countess were in the main fashionable resorts; and in some of her Churches the appointments—furniture, balconies, and so forth—were of a rather ornate kind which might appeal to the aristocratic taste;[2] but it must not be supposed that Lady Huntingdon, though herself an aristocrat, and creditably anxious to bring the upper classes into a knowledge of what living Christianity meant, was by any means unmindful of the poor. This was not at any time the case; and as the years wore on, and aristocratic hearts were found to be stonier than she had hoped, scarcely good enough ground to yield even the *minimum* of a thirty-fold return for the sower's seed (the Countess of Suffolk flung out of the room in a passion, denouncing Whitefield's preaching as a "personal attack"[3]), it was more and more towards the poor that her efforts were directed. It was natural, however, that at the outset the very prevalence of irreligion among people of rank should induce her to make them her special care. For the future ministry of her "Connexion" she sought to provide by establishing a training College at Trevecca—Fletcher of Madeley being appointed its first President, though his Arminianism by and by compelled him to resign[4]—an institution which was later on removed

[1] *Infra*, pp. 246, 247.

[2] See Horace Walpole's description of the Countess's Church at Bath, where he heard Wesley preach (*Letters*, ed. Toynbee, vii. 49, 50).

[3] *Life and Times of Selina, etc.*, i. 98, 99.

[4] When the Calvinistic-Arminian controversy broke out again (see *supra*, p. 233 note).

to Cheshunt in Hertfordshire, and which is domiciled at Cambridge now. In all this Lady Huntingdon had no more idea of separating from the Church of England than Wesley had when he took Methodist organisation in hand. She did not even suppose that the establishment of her College (she had favoured and actively encouraged lay preaching for many years), and the sending forth from it of men unepiscopally ordained, necessarily involved a breach. But the story of the Countess's Connexion runs in this respect parallel with that of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Clergymen were forbidden by their Bishops to preach in the Countess's buildings: the whole movement was treated by the ecclesiastical authorities as an impertinent flouting of their prerogatives and a rude invasion of their preserves: once again the Church of England turned out of doors a child of its own which would gladly have knelt to receive a blessing; and at last the inevitable had to be faced. Indeed, the Countess of Huntingdon saw more swiftly than Wesley did how inevitable separation was, and uttered a more explicit declaration by way of accepting it than Wesley ever made. "I am to be cast out of the Church now," she said, "only for what I have been doing these forty years—speaking and living for Jesus Christ."[1] It had to be. A legal decision to the effect that the Bishop had a right to inhibit Church of England clergymen from preaching at Spa Fields had compelled the Countess in 1781—since only Nonconformist ministers could thenceforward be employed—to register her buildings under the Toleration Act as Whitefield registered the two Tabernacles which were specially his own; and in 1783, four years before Wesley took his decisive plunge on the same matter, an ordination was held within the walls. This was separation. And thus by 1787 (though, if we may again glance beyond that limit, it may be stated that the Countess of Huntingdon died in the same year as Wesley, 1791, she three months before him), Wesleyan Methodism, under Wesley's own supervision, had achieved the marvellous organisation imperfectly described above: Calvinistic Methodism, deriving from Whitefield and fostered by Lady Huntingdon's affectionate care, had achieved an organisation not indeed

[1] *Life and Times of Selina, etc.*, ii. 315.

comparable with that of Wesleyan Methodism, but not by any means to be despised; and both these organisations were to all intents and purposes outside the pale of the Established Church.

With the more aggressive side of the new Puritanism, of the "Evangelical Revival," in both its parts—with Methodism in both its Arminian and Calvinistic shades—we have now dealt. It remains to allot some brief space to that less enthusiastic but still genuine variety of the new Puritanism represented by those clergymen to whom the name "Evangelicals" is commonly applied. While Whitefield and Wesley were moving the multitudes, while the great Methodist organisations were covering the country, while the enthusiasm of revival was coursing through the veins of countless thousands, there were some of the clergy who felt what might be termed a far feebler, but still a real, throbbing in their pulses, and could not be content to sit idly down and believe that all things were well. The great call of the perishing world did not constrain them as keenly and painfully—though it did constrain them in measure—as it constrained the Methodist apostles; but they saw in the spiritual slackness of their Church a sign that somehow there had been faithlessness to the Gospel of the Church's Lord. And faithfulness to that Gospel they sought to restore—in themselves and their own preaching first, and then in the Church as a whole. Perhaps it would be fair to sum them up by saying that orthodoxy was their chief concern.[1] One hesitates, remembering the good works for which the school—particularly its representatives a little later on—were distinguished, to say that they may be described as evangelical rather than evangelistic; yet in comparison with Wesley and Whitefield the description would be true; and certainly they were prepared to be evangelistic only along conservative—or, if along new, then properly authorised and sanctioned—lines. It has already been said that the new movement for which they stood had the same *ultimate* source as that from which Methodism sprang—that is, it

[1] An admirable summary of their chief characteristics is given in Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 216-218, and in the same author's *Religion in England from 1800 to 1850*, i. 112, 113.

was really the result of an unrecognised protest of the Nonconformist spirit, an unconscious pressure of spiritual life against a rigid organisation's bonds. Moreover, it counted among its adherents some who had belonged to the Oxford "Holy Club." But it was not looked upon by those who took part in it as in any sense belonging to the Methodist movement with which the land was ringing; and although doubtless the "Evangelical" clergy owed a good deal to the Methodists, feeding their own fires from the Methodist flames, and although the very existence of Methodism doubtless augmented the ranks of the Evangelicals with many whom Methodism, though it stirred and warned, at the same time repelled, the majority of the Evangelicals were not very willing to acknowledge the debt. To an exact historical view, Evangelicalism is not a part of Methodism, but merely parallel with it, both being really parts of one larger whole. The Evangelicals were men who insisted as strongly as the Methodists did upon the evangelical doctrines of justification by faith and salvation through the atonement wrought by Christ (it should be added, also, that they were by a majority, though not unanimously, Calvinists), and who felt that the Church of England system did not in actual fact and practice give to these doctrines the prominence they deserved—in other words, that within the Church form had to a great extent taken the place of life; but they were not prepared to undertake, or even to countenance, the initiation of new methods on which the *imprimatur* of the Church had not been set. They could not bring themselves to, or favour in others, any breaking of the rules. Among them were, indeed, a few to whom this description does not quite apply. We have noticed how a small number of the clergy lent Wesley a helping hand:[1] certainly when one sees Fletcher of Madeley—already once or twice mentioned—establishing what were practically Methodist societies in his own neighbourhood, and undertaking the Presidency of the Countess of Huntingdon's College at Trevecca, one grows doubtful whether it be as an Evangelical or as a Methodist that one ought by rights to class him; and perhaps only the fact that he held fast to his Madeley vicarage, confining his

[1] *Supra*, pp. 228, 229.

work of evangelisation mainly to his own parish—in short, that he lived the life and rendered the services of an ordinary parish priest—which induces one to set his name upon the "Evangelical" rather than upon the "Methodist" roll. Vincent Perronet, also, was in such close friendship with Wesley, and gave him counsel so frequently, that the title of "Archbishop of the Methodists" was bestowed upon him by Wesley himself.[1] Such men as these were on the dividing line—nor is it any wonder, the situation as between Evangelicalism and Methodism being what it was, that such men there should be. But for the most part, the Evangelicals kept to their own side. They counted among them some honoured, and one or two great, names. It was not, indeed, until later on—till the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth—that the party became really influential and strong: Venn and Romaine both mourned over the small number of those like-minded with themselves; and the days when Church of England Evangelicalism flowered into such beauty and fragrance as it was afterwards to manifest in what is known as the "Clapham Sect"[2] were still some way off. But the tale of the party in the middle of the eighteenth century is by no means a contemptible one. Indeed, one or two names which were afterwards to appear among the "Claphamites"—for instance, those of Charles Simeon[3] and of John Newton, Cowper's friend—stand already upon the list. And besides these, particular emphasis must be laid upon the Henry Venn previously named, one of a family whose members served the pulpit of the Church of England with honour generation after generation[4]—Augustus Toplady, whose glory it is to have written one great hymn, and whose shame it is to have poured foul abuse on John Wesley's head—Thomas Scott, to whom Cardinal Newman said he "almost owed his soul"[5]—James Hervey, author of *Meditations among the Tombs*; and William Romaine, also previously named, the popular preacher

[1] Tyerman, *Life of Wesley* (ed. 1870), ii. 230.

[2] *Infra*, p. 350.

[3] Simeon really belonged to Cambridge, but frequently associated with the Claphamites. The name "Clapham Sect" is rather loosely fitting in many instances.

[4] See Venn, *Annals of a Clerical Family*.

[5] *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (ed. 1889), p. 5.

at St. George's, Hanover Square.[1] Among the Evangelicals, as among the Methodists, the philanthropic spirit had its shining representatives, as the mention of Granville Sharp's name—the name of a layman whose protest against slavery attracted attention as early as 1765,[2] and whose work in that line was to be so great—is sufficient to show. The clergy mentioned, with others like them, while in no wise identified with the enthusiasm or aggressiveness of Methodism, held, as Methodism held, the great evangelical ideas; and although they had nothing of Methodism's daring, originality, or willingness to launch out upon the deep, they must nevertheless be taken as representing the quieter flow of that same stream of Evangelical Revival—or revived Puritanism, to employ the other and more historically suggestive phrase—which Methodism represents in storm and flood.

If at the end of a review of the whole movement, anything more requires to be added, it is but this—that the story of the Evangelical Revival has shown, as at the commencement of the section we premised it would, how the movement was in all essentials a resurrection of the Puritanism of two centuries before. Indeed, as we look back upon the lives of its leaders, there rise unbidden to one's lips the phrases which served to characterise the leaders of the earlier time. Of Wesley, Whitefield, and those associated with them in their aggressive evangelistic crusades—of the men who bore the evangelical witness in quieter ways in the pulpits of the Established Church—we may say, as was said of Humphrey, Sampson, and their fellows, that it was for "goodness in itself," for religion in its innermost values, they supremely cared; that in effect, what they did was to raise a protest against the exalting of organisation over life; that their protest did not, however, fully realise its own nature or its own grounds; that they were in the grip of a spirit they did not fully understand; that their exalting of life over organisation was so to say instinctive rather than deliberate and conscious; that hence came the inconsistency of the

[1] A list of prominent early Evangelicals is given by Plummer, *The Church of England in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 136, 137.

[2] Clarkson, *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (ed. 1839), pp. 65 ff.

position they sought to maintain; and that such a protest as theirs, made honestly and even passionately as it was, was bound either to go further or to die away. Of course—as was also stated and explained at the section's start—the issue was in the second instance not the same as in the first. For the newer Puritanism, at least the more earnest and enthusiastic variety of it, went further and did not die. Owing to the special circumstances of its origin, to the fact that its special call had come upon it in the shape of a call to go out into the highways and compel men within the gates of the Kingdom of God, it found itself with a crowd of converts upon its hands, so that the movement had at last—whatever reluctance dwelt in its leaders' minds—to issue in the making of a Church. But the very fact that it did so issue, and that it so issued notwithstanding the reluctance of the leaders, only proves the more forcibly how peremptory was the alternative stated in the final sentence of the description above. The newer Puritanism, like the older, had either to go further or to die away. The Evangelicals, indeed, may appear to belie the alternative, since they did not immediately either progress or die. But they maintained their position only because their alliance with the spirit which was seeking to win them was so feeble as to level no threat of real invasion against the Church whereto they belonged; and we shall see that, notwithstanding their temporary occupation of territory within the Church's ground, their witness lost the impulse which had originally been behind it and so forfeited much of its spiritual value by-and-by.[1] In effect—as exponents of and standard-bearers for the spirit which commissioned them first—they died. In fact, it is not too much to say that the movement which had begun as a partial manifestation of the Nonconformist spirit passed over at last to the Conformist side. For the Evangelicals, as for the others, the alternative of going further or extinction was found to hold good. At no point, indeed, of the parallel as above suggested is there any flaw. Once again therefore it may be said of the entire movement, or series of movements, known under the unifying name of the Evangelical Revival, that it was sixteenth-century Puritanism—with its greatness,

[1] *Infra*, pp. 351-353.

its limitations, its inner driving forces, its possibilities and impossibilities, all reproduced—risen to life again. And moreover, recalling the link between the Evangelical Revival and the "religious societies" started in the reign of Charles the Second—how the Revival was a fuller development of the spirit whereby the societies had been inspired—and how far back accordingly the origins of the Revival go—it may be said also that once again the Nonconformist spirit sought to make its protest, and made it with a voice which grew loud at last, just when the dominance of organisation had been newly and more firmly fixed.

And it was from this renewed Puritanism—the larger sections of which were themselves being driven into Nonconformity against their will—that already existing Nonconformity was to feel the breath of religious revival blow across its wastes.

Section 2

Nonconformity and Religious Revival

Authorities.—The denominational *Histories* as for earlier sections, though Gough's *History of the Quakers* closes with 1760. Stoughton as before. For the Church of England, Overton and Relton in *The English Church from the Accession of George the First to the End of the Eighteenth Century*. For the general situation Stanhope's (Mahon's) *History of England* and Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* are available—the first-named only up to 1783.

It was impossible in the nature of things that the Nonconformist Churches should not experience the contagion of the movement which was going on so near their borders. Interest in that movement they were bound to feel; for the new Puritanism championed that vital religion for whose special service existing Nonconformity professed itself to have been born; and existing Nonconformity was accordingly compelled to weigh the new Puritanism in the balance and to decide whether or no it should be accepted as an ally. That an affirmative answer to the question ought to have leapt up in questioning minds as the only possible one simultaneously with the very propounding of the question itself is of course evident enough now. But it is scarcely surprising that contemporary Nonconformity should have poised hesitant for a while before descending upon the

affirmative note, or even that it should have tended for a moment to strike a note not affirmative at all. Remembering the religious declension by which Nonconformity had been overtaken, one realises that Nonconformity had to a very considerable extent lost the sympathetic instinct, the kindred emotion, which would at once have appraised the new Puritanism at its true worth and hailed it as a welcome friend. There might well be—as there was—a pause before the word of acceptance rang clear. In the end, however, it came. And indeed the vital religious force in the Revival, as it developed and manifested itself, soon put the matter quite beyond dispute. So keen, so full-flowing, so expansive, did that vital force prove itself to be, that it flooded not only the particular fields which the leaders of the Revival sought to fertilise and till, but the fields of other cultivators too ; and the Nonconformists found themselves enlarged both as to the number of their Churches and the quality of their religion through influences whose starting-point was far away. Numbers are not the only, or even the chief, test of religious vitality and success. Yet it is not without significance that when Josiah Thompson, a Baptist minister, calculated the number of Nonconformist congregations in England and Wales in 1760, he made the total come to twelve hundred and fifty-two.[1] This was a different story from that of 1731,[2] although the extent of the previous decline may be measured by the fact that even now Nonconformist members were practically where they had, according to Neal's estimate, stood in 1715.[3] The Nonconformists reaped where they had not sown. For that matter, it is perhaps one of the greatest testimonies to the worth of the Revival and to the exalted character of the realm of its birth that it thus conquered spheres it did not primarily set out to win, and without any deliberate intention of so doing thrust the Nonconformist world, as well as that wholly irreligious world which was its first objective, so deeply into its debt. Certainly this was what took place. Nonconformity had by its very position—by its very claim to be the special guardian of spiritual religion in the land—

[1] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 256, 257. The actual calculation was made in 1772. [2] *Supra*, p. 198. [3] *Supra*, p. 166.

to ask whether or no the Revival movement possessed a secret as good as or better than its own; but while it pondered the question, the question answered itself, inasmuch as Nonconformity found that under the Revival's influence its deserts were made to blossom as the rose; and so the answer, as much forced upon Nonconformity as chosen by it, was that this thing must be of God.

It is this action and effect of the new Puritanism upon existing Nonconformity that we have now for a little while to watch. Under the influence of the Evangelical Revival Nonconformity took the first step that led backward, upward, and home.

In respect of numbers, it was by the Congregational Churches that this action and effect were most visibly shown. By mere count, they prospered greatly while the Revival was rising to its height and maintaining itself there. And indeed it is but natural that this should have been so. For to some of Wesley's converts Wesley's Methodist organisation was a burden greater than they cared to carry; and Whitefield, comparatively careless of any organisation at all as he was, left his converts to settle down into any religious system they might prefer; and some of those who caught a new impulse from the Evangelicals within the Established Church found themselves in difficulties in their native ecclesiastical home; and to all those indicated the path to Congregationalism would appear the easiest road to rest. We may note again, as we noted before,[1] that some of the Churches founded under the influence of the Countess of Huntingdon, and based upon the same general principles —Whitefield's own two chief preaching-places in London, the Tabernacles in Moorfields and Tottenham Court Road, being rather curiously among them—remained separate from the Countess's "Trust"; and these came to be reckoned, and to reckon themselves, as Congregational by-and-by. The two congregations named were after Whitefield's death united under the pastorate of Matthew Wilks;[2] and a Church of the same kind and of equal fame with these

[1] *Supra*, p. 237. Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 575, 576.

[2] *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, i. 213, 214.

—Surrey Chapel—was built in 1782 for the ministry of Rowland Hill.[1] Independent these congregations certainly were, if not Congregational in the proper sense of the word. Perhaps semi-Congregational is the term which best describes them: indeed, in the case of the two Tabernacles there was considerable difficulty, even actual litigation, before the idea of "democracy in Church government"—the idea for which by this time Congregationalism largely conceived itself to stand, and the idea of Congregationalism which those Churches would of course adopt—vindicated its footing upon their floors.[2] An addition to Congregationalism, however, though a comparatively minor one, and an addition resulting from the new Puritanism's influence, these Churches may in some real sense be called. But the main sources of Congregational increase lay elsewhere, and are indicated in the sentences written above. As to newly kindled religious passion which found that its fires were damped down rather than fed by the Established Church, and which was accordingly driven to seek a more congenial climate, it may be noted as an illustrative instance that the Evangelical Henry Venn, though himself remaining a loyal son of the Church of England, roused in not a few a spirit which could not be content—that of the young preachers to whom he communicated something of his own fervour some became Congregationalists—and that the Congregational Churches "at Huddersfield, Holmfirth, Honley, and Brighouse, trace their origin to the work accomplished by Venn."[3] Elsewhere than in Yorkshire the same thing went on; and besides the incongruity felt by many who were privileged to enjoy a profoundly evangelical ministry between the earnestness of their own particular preacher and the cold rigidity of their Church as a whole, there was the danger that when the evangelical minister removed or died, unrestricted right of patronage might put a man of quite different spirit into his place. In the case of Venn's own successor at Huddersfield, something of the sort occurred[4]; and in other places—as

[1] *Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, ii. 319-321.
[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. 376-380.
[3] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 339.
[4] John Venn, *Annals of a Clerical Family*, p. 95.

at Truro — disappointed congregations or disappointed portions of congregations seceded to form Churches of the Congregational type.[1] As to the way in which both Wesleyan and Calvinistic Methodism — or rather, the preaching of both — resulted in the formation of Congregational communities, many counties could adduce testimony not to be gainsaid. Lancashire, where Congregationalism had hitherto been weak, added Congregational Churches to many of the large towns wherein it has since been a household word, and this because many who were spiritually roused under the Methodist call found themselves either over-provided or under-provided with organisation and rule according as the calling Methodism had been of Wesley's or Whitefield's type. In Yorkshire, similarly, Methodism, coming in as first conqueror of the religious field, and afterwards retaining large territories for its own government, nevertheless relinquished others to the Congregational power. And other counties, midland, east, and south, have a like tale to tell.[2] In cases not a few Methodism became the half-way house to a polity quite different from its own; and in other cases, converts who owed their spiritual life to Methodism passed straight into a Congregational form of association without even pausing in the half-way house.[3] It is scarcely necessary to say that the movement was an entirely natural one: there was no proselytising on Congregationalism's part: it was rather that Congregationalism received a gift for which it had not even sought, and which the new Puritanism in its overwhelming abundance could impart without any sense of loss; so that the modern representatives of the two sections may well rejoice together, ungrudgingly in the first instance, gratefully in the second, and without shame in either, both in those who gave and in those who received.

Growth in numbers, however, was the least important advantage that the Congregational and other Nonconformist bodies received from the new Puritanism. Internal develop-

[1] Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, p. 586; Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 592.

[2] See Stoughton, as former note, vi. chap. xiv. for many examples.

[3] See the instances of Sheerness, Portsea, and Bath, given by Waddington (*Congregational History*, iii. 596).

ment, rather than external increase, was the chief thing; and the evangelical heat of Methodism communicated itself to and corrected the coldness of existing Nonconformity in a degree most marked. Before long Churches of every order found the blood running more swiftly and healthily through their veins: the religious instincts in them—at the worst not dead, but only sleeping—rose up as the winds of the Revival swept by: deep answered to the call of deep; and Nonconformity was moved to remember the place whence it had fallen and to do once again its first works. As has been said, there was some hesitancy at first—a pause before the word of acceptance rang clear. The methods of Wesley, Whitefield, and their coadjutors were so different from anything to which Nonconformists were accustomed that many Nonconformist looks were at first questioning and shy. Yet there were not a few—more perhaps among the rank and file than among the leaders—who were waiting anxiously for just that inspiration which Revivalism could instil. Those watchers for the dawn whom we noticed at Aylesbury and Berkhampsted a little while ago[1] had their successors who also climbed into the high tower to gaze and hope and pray; and the Congregationalists of Basingstoke, writing to a sister Church at the Three Cranes in London, were asking in 1743 that their fellows in the capital should join them in special supplication for the resuscitation of "the Lord's dying cause."[2] Had the Nonconformist leaders been more alert, Nonconformity would probably have taken benefit from the Evangelical Revival even before it actually did. But for a time the leaders hung back. A notable exception, however, is found in the Congregational Doddridge, who was himself doing his best to bring about a Revival among his own denomination, ceaselessly exhorting his congregation and the ministers of other congregations to be more faithful in evangelical doctrine, more earnest in evangelical service, and more zealous to restore the dimmed gold of religion to its first fineness again.[3] To Doddridge the Evangelical Revival was as the springing up of waters

[1] *Supra*, pp. 199, 200.
[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 334, 335.
[3] Stanford, *Philip Doddridge*, chap. viii.

in the desert. He appeared in Whitefield's pulpit in 1743, and received a visit from Whitefield in his turn, careless of the reproaches levelled at him by some of those who were his Academy's chief support, careless of the remonstrances which even Watts could utter that by associating with Whitefield he should sink "the character of a minister, and especially of a Tutor, among the Dissenters so low."[1] And Doddridge was justified by time. His denomination (to linger upon that out of the others for a moment) soon found that he had seen and judged aright. The era of suspicion, in fact, speedily passed away—which general statement is hardly impaired by the fact that even a good deal later on some who should have understood have been somewhat slow in bestowing upon the Methodist movement the commendation which is its undoubted due.[2] Suspicion, in fact, could not maintain itself against the argument which experience presented on the other side. For long before the expiration of the period which our previous section covered, "the Congregational Churches had caught the flame. Their ministers were beginning to preach with a new fervour, and their preaching was followed by a new success. The religious life of their people was becoming more intense. A passion for evangelistic work was taking possession of Church after Church, and by the end of the century the old meeting-houses were crowded ; many of them had to be enlarged, and new meeting-houses were being erected in town after town and village after village in every part of the kingdom."[3] So by its fruits the thing was known.

But other Nonconformist denominations besides the Congregationalists had to own the Revival's spell. Of the two chief Baptist sections, the Calvinistic Baptists were, perhaps, somewhat slower in yielding—in part because it was upon their special Baptist doctrine (the familiar point comes up again) that their gaze was fixed, in part because their internal controversy as to open or strict Communion was

[1] As previous note, pp. 98, 99; *Diary and Correspondence of Doddridge* (ed. Humphreys), iv. 269, 270, 274-281.

[2] Note in this connection the curiously patronising tone adopted towards Methodism—particularly towards the Wesleyan section of it—by the Congregational historians Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 1-62.

[3] Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, p. 585.

still unsettled,[1] and in part because they happened to be upon the crest of a hyper-Calvinistic wave of feeling which made many of their leading representatives lift the duty of maintaining Calvinism to a position co-equal with that of maintaining the special Baptist doctrine itself. Nor is it difficult to understand how the duty just named came to be exalted so high. It was natural that, having before them in the heterodoxy of the General Baptist body what might easily be taken as an illustration of Arminianism's effects—and what indeed probably was to no inconsiderable extent an actual illustration of the same—the Calvinistic Baptists should stress their own Calvinism more and more. Also it is worth noting that as the years of this very period passed on, one famous man among the Calvinistic Baptists themselves—Robert Robinson—was emphasising the lesson by going the same way (to ultimate Socinianism as the seeming result of Calvinism's abandonment) that the General Baptists as a whole had travelled.[2] One cannot be surprised that men like Gill of Horselydown,[3] perhaps the strongest theologian and controversialist of that particular time, should blend believers' baptism and Calvinistic doctrine together as the two notes of the chord he incessantly struck. Possibly, also, the Arminianism of the Wesleyan Methodist section of the Revival was an additional incentive to the Calvinistic Baptists to press their cherished Calvinism hard. But thus absorbed in their two special lines of advocacy, the Calvinistic Baptists could scarcely be as open as the Congregationalists to the influx of the Revival spirit; indeed, it may be said with justice that their very concentration upon the second of the two, so fixed as it was, tended in the end to religion's hurt rather than to its increase, inasmuch as insistence upon "divine decrees," upon the idea that man could of himself do nothing good and that God's elective will had settled all issues beforehand, sometimes ended in making the whole business of "practical godliness" appear of very small account;[4] so that the

[1] See *supra*, p. 133 and note.

[2] For this remarkable man, see Dyer's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson*.

[3] There is a *Brief Memoir* of Gill by John Rippon.

[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 363, 364.

colours with which the Revival charged its brush were not those that would most readily lure the hyper-Calvinist's eye. A Baptist historian, for instance, while bearing testimony to the worth of Wesley's work, frankly remarks, "The Arminian sentiments of Mr. Wesley prevented any connection between him and our ministers, who were in general zealous Calvinists."[1] Nevertheless, among the Calvinist Baptists, too, as time went on, it was found that the new spirit made such a breach that capitulation had to come; and there is ample justification for the historian who declares that "at this very time the denomination, whether cognizant of it or not, really caught the bracing breeze which had come sweeping down from the hills of Methodism over Baptist meadows as well as Independent fields."[2]

It is the General Baptists, however, who afford one of the most remarkable testimonies to the new Puritanism's power of restoring things which were ready to die. After Socinianism captured it, the body dropped swiftly into decay; and when the Evangelical Revival began, it was not much more than a cumberer of the ground. But shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century the bough which had looked so dead began to put forth leaves. Somewhat strangely, the people through whom new health was presently to be given to the General Baptist community were not originally members of that community at all. It appears that a number of men and women in Leicestershire —Daniel Taylor being the chief figure in their ranks[3]— having come under the influence of the Revival on its Methodist side, formed themselves into a religious association; and since, through processes now no longer clearly traceable, they shortly afterwards embraced Baptist views, they emerged into a position—Evangelical, Arminian, and Baptist—much like that which the General Baptists had occupied when their history began. Attracting to themselves a considerable number of adherents, they had multiplied into at least five distinct societies by 1760; and

[1] Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, iii. 290.

[2] Stoughton, as former note, vi. 364.

[3] This man must not be confounded, as Stoughton, for instance, confounds him (*History of Religion in England*, ed. 1881, vi. 355), with Dan Taylor, a servant of the Countess of Huntingdon. See *Dictionary of National Biography*.

thereafter the eyes of a good many of the old General Baptists—some having remained faithful among the faithless, and some hearing the loud call to repentance which was being borne from Evangelicalism on every wind—began to turn to them as to a possible centre round which a revived denomination might be grouped. If one prefers to put it so, one may say that it was the General Baptists who came to them rather than they who came to the General Baptists; and yet, when the relation between the two had crystallised into the General Baptist New Connexion (the formal constitution of the new body and the drawing up of its "articles of faith and practice," are dated 1770) it was the original General Baptists who had evidently marked out the line. The "articles" themselves do not indeed go much beyond the assertion of fundamental evangelical points. But the new body may be supposed to have held the views of Taylor himself, and from this point of view it may be put that the General Baptists who came over are seen to have recognised the error of their ways, and at the same time to have been desirous of avoiding the other extreme. They had struck against Scylla before, and were willing to confess that they had gauged the currents wrongly; but they were in no wise unmindful of Charybdis even now. Taylor, while professing belief in "a threefold distinction in the Divine nature"—this as against the special heresy which marked the original denomination—refused to employ the word "Persons"; and while receding from the former over-emphasised Arminianism, he declared that God's election was "according to fore-knowledge," which is only another way of putting the Scriptural statement that those whom God "called" were those whom He "fore-knew."[1] The Connexion thus formed was to have a long and honourable history; and we shall find that even at the end it died only to live again as part of a larger whole.[2] Its interest at the present stage lies chiefly in the evidence its formation affords of the power wielded by the resuscitated Evangelical spirit; for if a denomination so feeble—so

[1] For the formation of the new body, see Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, ii. 2-146. Taylor's own statement of belief is in *ibid.* ii. 470-477.

[2] *Infra*, pp. 384, 385.

collapsed, would not be too strong a word—as the General Baptists were at the early middle of the eighteenth century could be so marvellously vitalised, directly or indirectly, by the new Puritanism before the century's close, then the new Puritanism must indeed have possessed a secret learnt from heaven.

As might be expected, the channels through which the new spirit among the Nonconformists flowed forth were numerous, and covered many fields. Fresh foundations for the training of ministers were set up, in part because the increasing number of churches required it, and in part because some of the older institutions had contracted—as, for instance, Doddridge's Academy at Northampton had contracted after Doddridge's death in 1751—the Socinian taint. The majority of the new educational houses were Congregational; and they were distributed in different parts of England in order that local needs might be adequately supplied. One, however—that at Newport Pagnell—deserves special mention in that Church and Dissent were both represented alike among its managers and its students, John Newton the Evangelical clergyman being its real creator, and William Bull the Congregational minister of the place its first Head, while the students were free at the close of their curriculum to choose their field of service as they preferred. The first Baptist ministerial Academy (the Baptists had been behindhand in this matter hitherto) having come into existence in the reign of George the Second, was enlarged as to its equipment and broadened as to its scope in that of George the Third.[1] But it is the greater activities of the Churches themselves, the stronger spirit of service and consecration in their members, that stand out as indicating how the sluggish waters had been stirred. Meetings multiplied: an additional Sunday evening service of a popular character became permanent in many places: week-evening meetings open to all, and not held for the exclusive benefit of accredited members alone,

[1] On the Academies, see Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 519-542; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 317-322, 359, 360; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 559-561, 593-595; Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 443-448, etc., etc.; Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, iv. 26, 262 ff.

became regular institutions, the Baptists being probably in these matters the pioneers: early-morning prayer-meetings on the Sunday made their appearance; and many of the features common to Nonconformist Church life to-day had their origin in the eighteenth-century baptism with which Nonconformity was baptized.[1] A form of Christian activity which was to produce widespread results began in 1783 with the institution of Sunday schools—these, though it is to the Churchman Robert Raikes that they owe their origin, being speedily adopted by Nonconformists everywhere,[2] and as speedily proving their usefulness and worth in the eyes of the world.[3] The philanthropic spirit—for with the Nonconformists, as with those from whom they learnt, a revival of faith meant an accompanying revival of works, and the Epistle of St. James had authority side by side with those of St. Paul—manifested itself in such men as John Howard, who commenced in 1773 that work of prison investigation and reform whereby he built himself an undying name.[4] And though the great outbreak of the missionary spirit still tarried, it must be stated that the desire to carry the Gospel to the heathen nations—the desire which had cried aloud in Doddridge long before[5]—was stirring in William Carey as he began his Baptist pastorate at Moulton in 1787, and stirring in him with a passion which was in itself a promise of fruition and success.[6] And all these things are but samples from a list of religious services and enterprises which might be almost indefinitely enlarged, and a list which, as we shall have occasion to remark, was to grow yet longer in the next few decades. If the enquiry be put whether the revival of religion among the Nonconformists of the eighteenth century was really something more than a correc-

[1] Bogue and Bennett, as previous note, ii. 557; Stoughton, as previous note, vi. 379, 380, 429; Dale, as previous note, p. 561.

[2] For the beginning of Sunday schools, the transition from paid to unpaid teachers, and other interesting related matter, consult Watson, *History of the Sunday School Union* and *The First Fifty Years of the Sunday School.*

[3] See for instance the Dean of Lincoln's emphatically expressed approval (1786) in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, lxvi. 258, 259.

[4] *Dictionary of National Biography.*

[5] Stanford, *Philip Doddridge*, pp. 97, 98; Doddridge's *Works* (ed. 1803), iii. 235-260.

[6] George Smith, *Life of William Carey* (Everyman's Library), pp. 22, 23.

tion of heterodoxy and a heightening of emotion—whether it was really the revival of a spiritual motive force, telling first of all within and thereafter, because it has told so powerfully within, telling also without—an answer in the affirmative sense starts out with unmistakeable emphasis from such facts as these.

From the denominations which regained spiritual health and vitality through the Revival's healing touch, it is a natural transition to those on which that touch was laid in vain or which, it might be more correct to say, refused to let it come near. One is not surprised to find that the Presbyterians call for first mention among these. They were the strongest champions of the new thought which beckoned along the Socinian road: after the passing over of those of their members who cherished the older faith to the Congregational Churches, the alternative remaining to the Presbyterian denomination properly so called was that of keeping up a strenuous fight for the tenets whereto it was now committed or sinking into decay. That it was able—as the General Baptists, by contrast, were not able—to keep itself upon the first of the alternative lines, was due to the presence in the body of a number of able men who could present the doctrinal case with distinction and force. The Presbyterians had always recognised the value of an educated ministry; and now they reaped their reward. There are names upon the Presbyterian roll of this period—such as those of Priestley, Kippis, Chandler, and Taylor,[1] the first three being members of the Royal Society—whose bearers were distinguished in theology, literature, or science, or in all of these, and some of whose work holds value still; and it was impossible that a denomination which possessed such stars should not shine with some brilliance into the eyes of the world. But, as one would expect, the light it threw was rather of the cold intellectual than of the warm religious kind. Active the Presbyterians certainly were.

[1] See Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. chap. xiii. It should be said that while the Socinian *tendency* is clear in the leading Presbyterians, its precise *degree* varies. Chandler, for instance, is a rather doubtful case. It was said of him, half-seriously, half-humorously, that he always preached more evangelically after an illness (Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters*, 2nd ed., ii. 593 note).

They emulated the Congregationalists and Baptists in providing for the education of their future ministers;[1] and they out-did the Congregationalists and Baptists in their ardour for greater freedom of religious thought. To this latter point we shall presently recur;[2] though we may remark at once, in anticipation of what must presently be repeated, that the peculiar position of Socinianism—which was still nominally under the condemnation of the law, though its existence was winked at—may account for the greater zeal in this regard which the Presbyterians displayed. But the passing of the Evangelical Revival left them cold. Their business—a business deliberately adopted—was to contend for a theological system which the Revival by its very nature was set to overthrow. Indeed, it is probably doing no injustice to the Presbyterianism of that day to say that the coming of the Revival, by a sort of reverse action, drove the spiritual, as distinct from the mental, thermometer of Presbyterianism further down the scale, alienated Presbyterianism still more from any religion that had in it ecstasy whether of joy or sadness, aspiration or despair, and helped to settle it into that somewhat chill intellectualism which has almost always marked Socinian or Unitarian Christianity down to the present day. Eighteenth-century Presbyterianism drew aside, not quite it may be without some suggestion of disdain in its pose, as it heard the sound of the Revival's uplifted voices and hurrying feet approaching; and then, the hosts of undignified and tumultuous piety having passed, eighteenth-century Presbyterianism, unsullied or unblest—at any rate untouched and calm—"plunged in thought again."

That the Quakers, like the Presbyterians, should have remained generally uninfluenced by the Revival may at first appear surprising. Having regard to the supreme place which the necessity of vital religion occupied in their esteem, one might look for them to spring up in glad greetings to the Revival when it came. In fact, however, points of contact between the Revival and Quakerism were but few. Whitefield had, indeed, met with kindness and even help

[1] Stoughton, as previous note; Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 500 ff., 640 ff.

[2] *Infra*, p. 270.

from certain Friends; but there is no evidence that the body as a whole was deflected by the influence of the Revival a hair's breadth from the path which it was following and would have followed if the Revival had never been. And if one begins to seek for reasons why Quakerism was thus unresponsive, one soon realises that the excitement marking much of the new Puritanism and its work may easily have become an offence to those whose chief pre-occupation was to follow the "light within." To these, Revivalism must have savoured too much of crying "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" and of making "observation" bring in the Kingdom of God. But that is not all. To understand why the Evangelical Revival flowed round the walls of the Quaker garden instead of irrigating it, we must remember that the Quaker position differed considerably from that of the other Nonconformist bodies of the time—or, rather, the course by which they had reached it differed from that which the others had trod. The Quakers were only *one* step down from their original platform, instead of two or three; nor, in tracing their way, have we had to deal with such complicated matters as have engaged us in the case of the other denominations—such matters, for example, as the substitution of the "toleration" idea for another and greater one as fundamental, or the action and reaction upon one another of ecclesiastical and doctrinal ideas. With the Quakers, the late and so to say "forced" coming of organisation, and the consequent difficulty of fixing its laws and limits (this difficulty being intensified for them by the fact that their initial depreciation of intellect had rendered them intellectually weak in grappling with it) had been the one source of confusion and decline.[1] It was with this problem, or, rather, with many of the *minutiae* involved in it, that the Quakers were occupied while the Revival was proceeding; while weakness on the intellectual side prevented them both from realising the relation which the problem bore to their fundamental ideal and from seeing that the problem itself was being formulated in cramped and small ways. In fact, it is recognised by Quaker authorities themselves that undue depreciation of intellect, with its consequent neglect of

[1] *Supra*, pp. 133-136.

education on any large scale—these things bringing in their train a lack of leaders with wide outlook and philosophic grasp of mind—had much to do, at this time and later on, with Quakerism's stagnation. "The movement was hampered from the start, by the imperfect conception of the inward Light, and of the whole relation between the Divine and the human, which was consciously or unconsciously adopted." And the same writer goes on to explain that "their failure to appreciate the importance of the fullest expansion of human personality by education is the primary cause of their larger failure to win the commanding place in American civilisation of which their early history gave promise." And elsewhere he remarks, "The world-vision faded out, and the attention focussed on 'Quakerism' as an end in itself."[1] Those on whom the responsibility of leadership was resting saw small points, and saw them as in an intensely-illumined circle of light; but great ideas, still more the relations between ideas, were outside the compass of their vision. A curious instance of this is afforded when about 1737 the idea of "birth-right membership" was allowed to enter—the meaning of this being that whole families should be considered as members of the Society to which the fathers belonged, and this even after the fathers themselves were dead.[2] The motive of the change was the wholly praiseworthy and pure one that wives and children should not be left in poverty, but should have an indefeasible claim upon the Society's power of help; but it must have been a curiously dwarfed thought which failed to see the contradiction between "birth-right membership" and the original ideals whereon Quakerism had built. In regard to the matter with which we are just now concerned, intellectual weakness and confusion told thus. Those who were pressing the matter of authoritative organisation dealt with authority and rule, not in the large conception of them which Fox, when he turned his attention to the matter, had framed, but merely as being concerned with detailed points of dress, behaviour, and the general conduct of life's practical affairs,

[1] Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies*, Preface, pp. xxv, xxvi, xxiii.

[2] Barclay, *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, p. 520.

thus giving plausibility to the accusation that they were caring for outward things instead of for the heart; while those who felt that in all this there was something wrong felt it only vaguely and, without attempting any real adjustment between the idea of "authority" and that of the "inner light," rebelled on particular points of practice and conduct alone. The pressure of authority was directed chiefly towards securing obedience to a table of detailed precepts; and resistance to that pressure was not much else than an instinctive kicking against the pricks. In many ways, it must in all frankness be said, the searching minuteness of regulation to which all branches of conduct were submitted told for good. Rules which emphasised the obligation of honest trading, of avoiding debt, and the like —though the very promulgation of them may perhaps indicate that the idea of "inner light" as "inner life," an "inner life" which must by its own dynamic power set all external practice fair and true, was not grasped as it should have been—were in themselves indisputably right; and as a matter of fact, Quaker practice in all such things rose to a higher average level than that of even the general Christian world. The Quakers, too, wear the honour of having been beforehand with other Churches in protest against the slave-trade. In 1758 and 1761 the London Meeting passed resolutions forbidding its members to take part in a traffic so infamous, and declaring that any one who did so should be expelled;[1] while in 1783 they sent to Parliament a petition asking that the trade should be stopped.[2] In respect of philanthropy, indeed, the Quakers needed no revival, for in this respect there had been no decay. In such high matters as these, the voice of authority spoke in royal, and therefore commanding, tone. But when authority condescended to such detail that hardly a moment of an ordinary person's ordinary day was not surveyed and judged—when it objected to the slightest colour in dress, objected to such worldliness as might be implied in the use of coaches at a wedding, objected to ornaments on infants' cradles, objected to the drinking of tea—nothing else could be expected than that

[1] Clarkson, *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (ed. 1839), pp. 89, 90.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 93.

many should grow irritated and perverse. And it was to a great extent in advocating or in chafing at ordinances such as these that Quaker energies at this time were frittered away.[1] Of course under these circumstances vital spiritual experience stood low with the Quakers as with others; and if that had been all, one might expect the Quakers to be roused by the Revival as others were roused. But one has to note that, according to what has just been said, Quakerism was drooping religiously in great part because it was *intellectually* confused; and one must lay aside that fact in one's mind to be presently taken up again. Then one must go on to note that there were times when, and places where, the old Quaker testimony rang out: indeed, the body as a whole issued in 1760 an informal declaration which showed that, theoretically at least, the old positions were honoured, and more than this, that the spiritual experiences they dealt with were aspired after and loved.[2] And putting all these things together, one can see how unlikely it was that out of the Evangelical Revival there should come the force which should make Quakerism retrace the "one step downward" it had taken. On the problem over which such large sections of Quakerism were knitting their brows—the problem of how far minuteness of practical prescription should be carried—the Revival had no word; while on the other hand, the fact that Quakerism's difficulties were to a great extent the result of intellectual confusion—that out of all their intellectual confusion and out of all the religious feebleness it entailed they were really groping with up-lifted hands for the ideal they had lost, not infrequently striking with their uplifted hands against it and even beholding it in its great glory now and then—would prevent the Quakers from feeling either the reproach or the appeal of the Revival as others did. It may be added at once that although the actual return of Quakerism towards its ideal began later than that of other Nonconformist bodies, the fact that they were only *one* step down from the ideal caused the return in

[1] See on this Barclay, *Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, pp. 538, 547, etc.

[2] In the preface to *A Collection of Testimonies concerning several Ministers of the Gospel*. The preface is not in any sense a creed, but a brief reaffirmation of a conviction that the old Quaker truths still hold good and must spread.

the case of Quakerism to be more swiftly and completely made—but that we shall notice by-and-by. To the Revival itself the Quakers were not debtors as were those Nonconformist Churches whose debt we have endeavoured to gauge.

Reverting now to the Nonconformist Churches over which the breath of the Revival came with quickening power, one has to confess that in their case much had been regained, and may add, besides, that what was regained has never been wholly lost again. It is impossible to over-value that renewal of vital religion which stirred the Churches; and it is impossible to rejoice too fervently that vital religion, however at different periods it has waxed and waned, has never sunk to the low levels whereto it had dipped down before the renewal came. Certainly the first step—the *first* step if no more—backward, upward, and home had been taken by the Nonconformity which had wandered so far: the curve along which Nonconformity had been borne from its original position had touched the lowest point of its sweep and had turned; and even if it were not yet perfect day once more, at least the utmost darkness was past. Through change and enfeebling of its great Church-ideal—the ideal of a Church in which life made organisation rather than a Church in which organisation was looked on as the gateway to life—Nonconformity had travelled, and to religious decay Nonconformity had come: now Nonconformity had set its feet upon the religious upgrade once again. But whether the new Nonconformist religious fervour, resulting as it did from the influence of the Evangelical Revival, contributed anything towards a re-vivifying of the true Nonconformist ideal in the Nonconformist mind—whether, in fact, it may not have made such a re-vivifying to some extent more difficult—is another question. And as we look at it, we may have to conclude that while the Revival did enable Nonconformity to take the *first* step backward, upward, and home, and may have been more or less vaguely suggested (if only by the sense of ascent involved in taking it), that there might be more steps to follow, it did nothing to bring the *entire* stairway or its topmost platform into view, and that the very conditions under

which Nonconformity received its new baptism of religious fire militated somewhat *against* the chances of the essential Nonconformist spirit and the ultimate Nonconformist ideal.

That in the nature of things those conditions could not make the prospect easier for the Nonconformist spirit and ideal, or render them any positive help, is evident enough. The Revival meant before all else a creation of personal and individual piety in those who had been barren of it before, a resurrection of it in those in whom it was dead; and it answered in this way to the supreme call of the hour. But it carried no direct avowals, not even any obvious implications, as to the true conception of the Church. As to the true relations between organisation and life in the Church within which its converts might finally be folded, it did not openly speak. Born out of the Nonconformist spirit though it was, this fact, as we have noted, was not recognised by those who controlled or served it; and their whole business was to bid men be reconciled to God and walk worthily of the calling wherewith they were called. Beyond that they did not look. Even Wesley's magnificent and many-ramified organisation was not set up as standing for the concrete expression of a definitely conceived Church-ideal. As the influence of the Revival spread, therefore, it made for the renewal of personal religion, indeed, but it made for this alone: those who became its debtors took from it what it had to give, but could not in the nature of the case take from it what it did not itself possess; and in what they took there was, if a suggestion, not more than a suggestion, that somehow, and from somewhere, something more must be obtained. But that is not all. Revival of religion in the Nonconformist Churches necessarily carried with it *some* sort of quickened conception of what a Nonconformist Church really was. And as the Church-conception upon which Nonconformity in its chief representative branches had previously been pausing was the conception of "democracy applied to Church-affairs," coupled with a claim for fuller evangelicalism than dwelt within Church of England borders, it was this conception which would now (since there was nothing in the circumstances to suggest the con-

ception's insufficiency, or the memory of a greater conception long ago forgotten) re-assert its hold. And even this leaves something more to say. We have seen how the existing Nonconformist Churches—the Congregationalists largely, the Baptists perhaps less markedly but markedly still—had grown in numbers because many converts first won by Methodist preaching did not care to settle down in the Methodist ranks. Adherents such as these would have even less knowledge of or care for any lost Nonconformist tradition than the native Nonconformist would have.[1] They came simply because existing Nonconformity suited them better, possibly in ways they did not very clearly define even to themselves, than did the Established Church or the Methodist Societies. And their coming would tend to settle Nonconformity still more firmly upon a Church-conception composed of the two linked elements just named. That Nonconformity stood on the one hand for an intenser evangelicalism than the Church of England was an idea to which they would not only subscribe, but which they would emphasise; for the very movement to which their own Christian life owed its start had been a protest against the lack of evangelicalism which the Church of England displayed; while the Nonconformity they joined seemed to be finding in the evangelicalism of that movement the one thing it needed to bring the bloom of health upon its cheek once again. That Nonconformity stood on the other hand for "democracy applied to Church affairs" was an idea which, finding it already in possession, these new recruits to Nonconformity would be far from questioning, and to the promulgation of which they would indeed readily lend their voices with strength; for it supplied them immediately with something positive to set side by side with their denial of the Establishment's evangelicalism; and it also enabled them at once to find their place, and to fill it, in the Church order they now made their own. What they had to do, in fact, in order to find and fill that place (and herein is the fatal harmfulness of the "democracy applied to Church-affairs" idea) was to put forward a claim rather than to

[1] On this aspect of the matter, see also Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 588-590.

recognise the duty involved in the acceptance of a large and searching idea. Of course, with both the older and the newer adherents of Nonconformity, intensified personal religion would cause the actually existent Nonconformist Church-conception, inadequate as it might be, to be more *religiously* held ; and in all the Church did under that conception its members would have a more chastened spirit, a more serious tone, a more solemn sense of responsibility to God and Christ. But Dale hits the mark in observing, " When they spoke of looking for Christ's guidance in these solemn acts, the most devout of them probably meant that only by the aid of His Spirit could they hope to exercise their own *rights* wisely." [1] Putting all these things together, we are driven to the conclusion that the taking of the first step backward, upward, and home by Nonconformity did not, because of the conditions under which it was taken and the circumstances by which it was attended, suggest the long and high climb that yet remained—at any rate the furthest reaches of it—and that while the influence of the Evangelical Revival was all to the good so far as the renewal of personal religion is concerned, it did nothing to further the realisation in concrete Nonconformist history of the essential Nonconformist ideal.

To say that the Evangelical Revival, while assisting Nonconformity to take the first step on its homeward journey, did not immediately show the whole road and the home goal clear to Nonconformity's gaze, is to say (coming to the primarily relevant application of that general statement) that it did not in any direct way nerve Nonconformity to press eagerly forward for the extension of its political freedom or the removal of the disabilities implied in the Test and Corporation Acts. Indirectly—when the fuller self-consciousness it brought about had had time to feel for its bearings—it did something in this direction, as we shall see.[2] But that was later on, and the influence was indirect rather than direct. At a recent stage of its downward journey, as we saw, Nonconformity had taken the matter of repeal for its chief concern ; and if Nonconformity was to return by the way it had come, it was upon this platform that its return-

[1] As previous note, p. 590.

[2] *Infra*, pp. 287 ff.

ing and ascending steps must land it again. The revived passion for larger freedom on the way up would be—as it was when it came—what the earlier passion on the way down had been, a passion for larger freedom as a good and a goal *in itself*, not as being implied in the ultimate Nonconformist ideal of inner life controlling and making all. But the passion must come. But of course it was not to be expected that the Evangelical Revival should make this clear: this was a side of things with which religious revival as such had no direct concern. In fact, such effect as it had upon possible efforts for an extension of what the Toleration Act had bestowed would at first be by way of causing them to be put aside and forgotten; for the concentration upon faith, conversion, and holiness which Revivalism wrought naturally blocked all other matters out. The lesser stars went out in the glory of the great sun as it rose. And up to the close of the period with which we are dealing (that is, as it may be expedient to repeat, up to 1787) Nonconformity, taken as a whole, allowed such efforts to rest. Even the comparatively languid attempts at obtaining the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts which had been made before the period set in were suspended now. That series of attempts did indeed slightly overlap the present period's beginning; for in 1739 a Bill for repeal was discussed in the Commons, only to be more ignominiously defeated than other similar Bills had been.[1] It is significant, as showing Nonconformist lassitude, that the Dissenting Deputies tried to congratulate themselves that the cause was at any rate no worse off than it had been before;[2] and after that there came a long lull. Nonconformity's action may be fairly described by saying that Nonconformity took no initiative: it asserted itself when circumstances compelled; but it did no more. A defensive, though certainly a vigorous one, was all it dared. There were reminders now and again that the Nonconformist cause was not yet wholly won; and of these reminders some, one would have supposed, were sharp enough to rouse Nonconformists to a temper of hot fight.

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, xxiii. 310.

[2] *Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Dissenting Deputies* (ed. 1814), p. 13.

Even now, notwithstanding the Toleration Act, Nonconformist ministers were sometimes insulted as they preached, Nonconformist services riotously disturbed, Nonconformist buildings attacked[1]—which experiences might well have taught Nonconformity that it could not yet afford to sit still. But, except when actually goaded, to sit still was its choice. Perhaps it was fortunate that the goad was now and then applied; for thus Nonconformity's slumber was saved from becoming too profound; and proof was given that Nonconformity had powers of resistance in reserve. When the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 broke out (some of the Non-Jurors were again involved), and the Pretender's early triumphs sent waves of panic rolling up to the gates of the Capital itself, the Nonconformists realised at once that what threatened the Hanoverian succession threatened their hard-won religious freedom too; and we find them, in meeting after meeting, expressing earnest hopes and prayers for the success of the King's arms. Nor did they content themselves with passive and pious assistance such as this. Stirring appeals were issued to the congregations to give practical service on the loyal side: Nonconformist Churches were offered and used for military drill: Nonconformists flocked to be enrolled in the ranks;[2] and we find Doddridge exulting because he had been able by his personal exertions to carry to the King's commander "four and twenty brave troops, if I may guess at them by their looks, the very best that were brought him."[3] Some years later, Nonconformists proved on a different field that they could fight and win when a challenge came. In 1767 they obtained from the highest tribunal a judgment closing a dispute which had lasted for thirteen years, and had indeed been heard rumbling more or less for twenty-seven. Was any person whatsoever, chosen for the office of Sheriff in the City of London, compelled to serve? The Corporation contended that he was; so that the dilemma in which a chosen Nonconformist officer found himself can easily be seen. He could not, if the Corporation were right, refuse the post; but then he

[1] *Sketch of the History and Proceedings, etc.* (ed. 1814), p. 29.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 27-29.

[3] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 353; Stanford, *Philip Doddridge*, pp. 143, 144.

could not, according to the Corporation Act, hold the post without qualifying for it by taking the Sacrament according to the order of the Established Church. So far back as 1742 a selected Nonconformist had declined to serve; but the matter became critical when in 1748 the Corporation passed a by-law imposing fines of four to six hundred pounds on any one who should refuse to stand, or, after election, to accept the post. For years the fines were paid; in fact, the Corporation must be adjudged guilty of having deliberately chosen Nonconformists as Sheriffs in order that the money paid by them might help the building of the new Mansion House then being reared. But in 1754 three Nonconformists declined either to serve or pay; and then came the thirteen years' litigation—only one of the three original defendants remaining in the case at the end, since one had been found to be beyond the Corporation's range of jurisdiction and one had died—which ended with Lord Mansfield's emphatic judgment that the Corporation was wrong.[1] On the matter at issue, the Nonconformist triumph was complete—and it was certainly great. And in one other department Nonconformists showed that, if they did not possess very much initiative, they could at least respond to the spur. Perhaps in respect of the matter now to be mentioned, this is scarcely to give them sufficient praise. What they really essayed was to turn to their own advantage an incident which had no original reference to them at all; and so perhaps the credit of a not unskilful piece of tactics is their due. In 1771 a movement commenced within the Church of England—Archdeacon Blackburne, a dignitary of Socinian tendencies, being the prime instigator—having for its object the lifting from the clergy of the obligation to subscribe the Thirty-Nine Articles.[2] The movement failed when it came to the Parliamentary test;[3] but it suggested to the Nonconformists—or to some of them, the rest falling in—that they themselves might and should seek to be relieved. The

[1] *Sketch of History and Proceedings, etc.* (ed. 1814), pp. 32-48. A good part of the judgment is given in Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 503-505.

[2] See *The Confessional*, in Blackburne's *Works*, volume v.

[3] No Bill was introduced, but the Commons declined by 217 to 71 to receive from London clergymen a petition embodying Blackburne's views (Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xvii. 246-297).

Toleration Act, it will be remembered, made Nonconformist freedom of worship conditional upon subscription—so that if Blackburne's aim had been gained, and the Nonconformists had not stirred, the curious result would have been (as indeed some one pointed out) that Nonconformist ministers would have been the only people in the country required to sign the Articles of the Established Church. It should be said that the obligation to subscribe was not, in the case of Nonconformists, habitually pressed; but it stood upon the statute-book, and could not be viewed otherwise than as constituting a grievance and embodying a covert slight. The Nonconformists—greatly encouraged by a remark which Lord North had made during the debate on the Church of England Bill, to the effect that on the part of Nonconformists a request for freedom from subscription would have seemed to him reasonable and right, since they did not take or seek for the Church's pay[1]—accordingly arranged for Parliamentary action to be set afoot. In 1772 a Bill—brought in by Sir Henry Houghton and Burke—substituted for subscription to the Articles a Declaration, on the part of Nonconformist ministers and teachers, to the effect that they accepted the Bible as a revelation of God's will and as the rule of practice. The Commons passed it, but the Lords refused.[2] Lord North, it may be remarked, had received a letter from the King saying that doubtless the Upper House would "prevent any evil";[3] and the Upper House fulfilled the King's desire. The third George was for liberality of nature by no means what his two immediate predecessors had been. Next year the same thing took place;[4] but seven years later opposition was feeble, and the Bill became law.[5] Perhaps Nonconformity's success on this occasion was partly due to its renewed effort having been made at a moment when liberality and breadth of view (always to be thought of as growing as it were in the natural order of

[1] Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), v. 457; Belsham, *Memoirs of Rev. Theophilus Lindsey*, p. 66.

[2] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xvii. 440; *Journals of the House of Lords*, xxxiii. 419.

[3] *Correspondence of King George the Third with Lord North* (ed. Bodham Donne), i. 101.

[4] Cobbett, as cited, xvii. 790, 791.

[5] *Ibid.* xx. 322.

things, and quite apart from any immediate applications of it which might be demanded or refused) happened to be strong. That it was thus temporarily strong is shown by the passage of a Bill through the House (in 1778) repealing the anti-Romanist laws which sentenced to imprisonment any priest who should celebrate Catholic worship, and ordained that Catholics educated abroad should forfeit their property at home.[1] It was with ease the Bill went through; and although the passions of the mob were played upon by bigoted fanatics, and the "Gordon riots" threw the metropolis into wild disorder for a few days, there was no real protest from the nation at large. Doubtless the Nonconformist Bill profited by the prevalent mood. But however that may be, all this may serve to show that Nonconformity, though it was not inclined, if left to itself, for drastic or decisive action, was alert enough to spring up under danger or to seize an opportunity which sparkled with any special glitter of gold. But one other thing must be said to make the tale complete. Following a remark previously set down —that the Presbyterians of this period out-did the Congregationalists and Baptists in zeal for religious liberty[2]—it must be stated that both in resistance to the arbitrary proceedings of the London Corporation and in the struggle for release from subscription, the Presbyterians were far to the front. Obviously they had—particularly in respect of the second matter—special reasons. They were tolerated, not under the Toleration Act, which expressly declared that over Socinianism it would cast no protecting shield, but in spite of it; and in such a precarious situation as this, it was clearly to their interest that freedom of religious thought and worship should be pushed forward to seize every possible inch of ground. Moreover, subscription to the Articles, while it was only difficult to other Nonconformists, was quite impossible to them; for to subscribe would have been not only to submit to an irritating demand, but to act a lie. All this is of course no depreciation, but only an explanation, of their eagerness; and, indeed, other Nonconformists had abundant reason to be grateful for the stronger Presby-

[1] Stanhope, *History of England* (2nd ed.), vi. 361.
[2] *Supra*, p. 257.

terian fire. Presbyterian names are numerous in the list of those who championed the Nonconformist side in the two cases mentioned above. Indeed, the statement we have more than once made that the Nonconformists took practically no initiative at this time must be qualified by saying that it *was* to Presbyterian-Nonconformist initiative the Bill in relief of subscription was due. Pickard and Furneaux had been in the gallery of the House of Commons while the Church of England Bill was under debate; and it was by these two men that the Dissenting Deputies were stirred.[1] It must be confessed, also, that some non-Presbyterian Nonconformists objected to the Bill granting relief from subscription on the ground that Socinianism would flourish more luxuriantly if the restraints of subscription were removed.[2] Even some who were in favour of the projected change complained that a false colour was being given to the matter by Presbyterian, otherwise Socinian, haste.[3] It is abundantly evident that Presbyterians were far swifter in the race than were the rest. The whole position is perhaps fairly and adequately summed up by saying that in all these things the Presbyterians moved because they were glad and eager to move, while other Nonconformists moved because they must. There is nothing to plead in arrest of the verdict that Nonconformity as a whole—Nonconformity in its chief branches—failed to pass on from revived zeal for religion to revived zeal for freedom from the burdens which still weighed it down. For this, the time was not yet come.

But it was soon to arrive. For the new and warmer self-consciousness which necessarily followed upon a religious revival—however pre-occupying a religious revival at first might be—was bound to bring other things, even things which at the outset it held off, in its train. And as our period ends, Nonconformity begins, somewhat suddenly, to take its second step backward and home. We have now—when we have passed a brief parenthesis on which we must dwell for a moment—to put ourselves where we can watch it as it resumes its backward, upward, and homeward climb.

[1] Belsham, *Memoirs of Rev. Theophilus Lindsey*, pp. 62, 66.
[2] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xvii. 763, 764.
[3] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 468, 469.

Section 3

Other Religious Movements—The Rise of "Particularist Nonconformity"

Authorities.—Chiefly the works mentioned in the footnotes.

The parenthesis just referred to has to deal with certain other religious movements found in England at the period now under our thought—movements for which neither department of our classification (Conformist or Nonconformist) supplies a place, although the first may do so if over and above the mere general class-name something more in the way of description be given. It may be said of them all—with some qualification, presently to be noted, in the instance of the Moravians—that they had their rise in a realisation of religion's feebleness and decay in the country; and for that feebleness and decay each of them, according to its knowledge and light, attempted to provide a cure. But it may be said of them all, also, that their initiators and adherents sought for that cure, not in any yielding to the pressure and appeal of that Nonconformist spirit by which, consciously or unconsciously, the men of the Evangelical Revival were mastered and won, but in running Conformity to yet stricter lengths, and this in respect of particular points of ritual, practice, or thought. These particular points, the inspirers of the movements in question supposed, needed to be set in more prominent positions on the field, if religion's drooping fortunes were to be restored. One can find no matter of surprise in the fact that to some, as they took their religious survey, religious decline should seem to have resulted from an insufficiency of the emphasis laid upon certain special points of the above-named kind: to minds of somewhat narrow sweep but of intense concentration, this would seem the natural reading of the matter: less susceptible than others to the larger and profounder forces which were circling round the world with offers to take the world's religious regeneration in charge, they would be far readier than others to swoop down upon *minutiae* which

appeared to them to have suffered from neglect, and to insert into the general religious scheme further *minutiae* which they themselves had hit upon and which they proceeded to exalt with all a discoverer's pride; nor is it strange that the recovered or discovered *minutiae* should grow more self-evidently valuable in their apostles' eyes as time and advocacy went on. In fact, the intenser the desire felt by them for religion's restoration, so much the warmer would their insistence on the supposedly restorative *minutiae* become. But what it is necessary to note, in justification of the title "particularist Nonconformity" set at this section's head, is this—that religious associations founded upon the importance of particular points such as those alluded to were driven into a Nonconformist position simply because their scheme was different from that of the Established Church, and that thus it is in concrete Nonconformity they find a place; but on the other hand, that precisely because it was on such particular points they laid untiring stress, they were Conformist rather than Nonconformist in essential spirit, and that only by the accident of situation do they come under the Nonconformist name. Of the true Nonconformist ideal they had caught no glimpse: from the true Nonconformist spirit their waters did not flow. As we view them, in fact, we come upon the fulfilment of a possibility hinted at in our preliminary study of what the Nonconformist spirit is—the possibility that adherence to certain doctrinal opinions, though nothing of the Nonconformist spirit, strictly speaking, may be involved in them, may lead to the secession of a party from existing Churches, and that accession to the ranks of concrete Nonconformity, quite apart from any working of the Nonconformist spirit, may thus take place.[1] Perhaps one may even say that another possibility, earlier hinted at, is in the case of some of them fulfilled—the possibility that a mere faddism may put forth a claim to represent the Nonconformist spirit and ideal and to be its consecrated and faithful priest.[2] At any rate, the title "particularist Nonconformity" may stand as indicating for us both what they were and what they were not—their essential Conformity being signified by the first word of the

[1] Vol. I. p. 17. [2] *Ibid.*

title, their accidental Nonconformity by the second. We have before—in the case of English Presbyterianism both in Elizabethan times and later on—met with a Nonconformist body which, while Nonconformist by reason of the position it was compelled to occupy, was really Conformist at heart; but Presbyterianism, being based upon a large conception and embodying a systematic and articulated Church-ideal, was not "particularist" in the way of the cases now to be observed. (Presbyterianism, of course, tended markedly in the "particularist" direction when the advocacy of Socinian doctrine came to be its chief concern; but perhaps its past, and so much of the heritage of its past as it preserved, may warrant it in asking not to be labelled with the "particularist" name.) And we have before seen how a genuinely Nonconformist Church may become to a considerable extent "particularist" when noting how the Baptists raised their special Baptist doctrine almost to the rank of a fundamental Church-idea; but so much of the true Nonconformist spirit has always remained among the Baptists as would make any ranking of them with the religious associations we are now considering altogether unjust. If they have been to some degree "particularist," they have always been much more; and to speak of them as "Nonconformist by accident" would be manifestly absurd. Denominations with a touch of "particularism" upon them we have met. But we have not—except possibly in the case of Muggletonianism,[1] which it is not unfair to say, constitutes a freak rather than a denomination—met with any religious body to which, as a body, the title "particularist Nonconformity" could be properly affixed. But for the religious associations dealt with here the title may serve, since it reminds us that circumstances flung them upon Nonconformist ground, while it was nevertheless upon conformity to specially-chosen doctrines or practices, and upon this alone, that they really built.

The present section need do no more than present a brief list—almost in catalogue fashion—of the three or four "particularist Nonconformist" movements belonging to the time with which we are concerned. But the emergence of

[1] *Supra*, pp. 95, 96.

particularist Nonconformity is worth nothing, apart from those instances of it at the moment under review, since we shall meet with larger and more important embodiments of it at a later stage.

It is with the Moravians—far the most important of the religious associations the section is to name—that the list may begin. Of the Moravians it cannot be said that they took their rise from a realisation of religion's feebleness and decay in England; for as their name at once shows, their system was an importation from abroad. But it may be said that a realisation of religion's feebleness and decay in England induced many here to listen to the Moravian voice. We have seen how Wesley, in his time of spiritual agony and crisis, found in the message of the Moravian preachers in Georgia and at home something that caught and held him, and something that went far to make the wild storms in his heart subside;[1] and what happened with Wesley happened with a good many more. At first, however, Moravianism found its adherents in Germans resident in our land. It claimed to descend from the teaching of John Huss and Jerome of Prague; but Moravianism as it has been known since the eighteenth century is to be traced to the settlement at Herrnhut in Lusatia, where Count Zinzendorf, the owner of the estate, gave shelter in 1727 to Bohemian and Moravian Christians whom persecution had driven from their native land.[2] It was in the following year that the Community settled the new—or, as the "United Brethren" themselves preferred to call it, the revived and restored—constitution of the brotherhood; the idea being that which has animated so many sincere founders of so many Churches since Churches began (however variously its implications may have been read)—the reproduction of the primitive apostolic model in every respect. As to the fashion in which the aspiration has translated itself into reality, the first thing to be noted—and a thing not without its effect on the fortunes of Moravianism in England—is that its organisation provides

[1] *Supra*, pp. 218-220.

[2] For Moravianism, consult E. de Schweinitz's *History of the Church known as the United Brethren*; *A History of the Moravian Church* by Hutton; *A Short History of the Moravian Church* by the same author.

for an episcopate; though Stoughton rightly appraises the matter when he says of the Moravian Church that "it has Bishops, but the government may be described as of a Presbyterian cast, because Synods, provincial and general, are the ruling powers."[1] Its doctrines are evangelical; and Peter Böhler, when he strove to instil into Wesley's mind, as the initial thing in Christian thought and experience, the supreme importance of justification by faith, struck what was always the first Moravian note. Enthusiastically evangelical, indeed, the Moravians must be called. If it be possible to be *too* enthusiastically evangelical, the Moravians might be open to the charge. In the case of some (we have seen how it was for this reason that Wesley sheered off from them at last)[2] the need of justification by faith was presented in such a way, with such lack of balance and proportion, that it was made to appear as if not even through prayer or any other religious exercise could the unjustified soul obtain any spiritual good. And depreciation of "works" as opposed to "faith" was in the case of some carried so far as to produce actually mischievous effects. But it must be added to this that Moravianism was not specially doctrinal at all—did not seek to systematise doctrine or to argue it, but simply assumed evangelical doctrine and then passed on.[3] Neither in episcopacy nor in doctrine is the *raison d'être* of Moravianism to be found. What it ultimately aimed at was the strictest possible regulation of the life of its members; and not only so, but the consolidating of its members, in any particular district, into a sort of self-contained community, trading chiefly within its own borders, having its own local supervisors, and holding the interests and the general voice of the fellowship and the counsel of the supervisors dominant in deciding every issue of life. In many districts of the Continent and America the plan has been pushed far. Community of wealth—though never an article of obligation on the Moravian societies everywhere—was instituted in some of the American settlements and kept up as long as circumstances made it wise. And as to the strict regulation

[1] *Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 369. [2] *Supra*, p. 219.

[3] See the article by L. D. von Schweinitz, in *The Religions of the World*, p. 248.

of individual life and conduct, grip has never been relaxed. In the early days it was decreed that the "lot" should be employed to reach a verdict on questions of marriage—the idea of course being that through the "lot" a special revelation of God's will was obtained: careful supervision of young people's manners and morals, occupations and amusements, was to be carried on by Elders' Conferences, responsible in their turn to the Synods of the Church: special houses were provided, under competent superintendence, for single young men and women whose parents were not at hand; and no one belonging to the community could ever feel that the watching eye was for an instant closed. Education is with the Moravians a primary concern; and their schools, admirably equipped and with a kind yet firm discipline, are cared for with utmost zeal. Control of individual life really went as far as this—that at practically every parting of the ways, however unimportant the issues might be, a special revelation of the divine will was to be sought through the special machinery which the Church always kept standing ready to work. It must not be forgotten, however, as affording some relief to a picture possibly not too attractive, that no regulations were looked on as changeless—a point in which the Moravians contrast favourably with many other Conformist bodies—but could be altered to meet altered conditions if the Synods deemed it well; and further, that the missionary impulse has been strong among the Moravians from their first days until now.

It may at first seem somewhat difficult to "place" a Church thus described. One finds within it a union of certain things not usually linked. Enthusiasm and insistence upon strict conformity do not generally keep company; yet in Moravianism they do. And when one comes upon a body which lays upon the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith such loud emphasis as Moravianism gives it, one is inclined to think that further investigation should find the ultimate tendency of the body in question to be toward the Nonconformist rather than toward the Conformist side. But a little searching comes upon the explanation and the clue. Probably the most illuminating consideration is this

—that although the Moravians insisted upon conformity to a whole series of regulations as the distinguishing mark of their fellowship, yet their aim and ideal, the community they sought to set up, implied a conformity not enforced, but voluntarily embraced. A brotherhood of obedience may be taken as the key-idea. While the discipline of the system was as closely-gripping and as all-embracing as was that of Elizabeth or that of Laud, the underlying conception was that of a brotherhood disciplining itself, not that of an unwilling crowd disciplined by a sort of ecclesiastical police. And upon a conception like this, precisely because it implied a foundation of self-sacrificing wills, not of coerced recalcitrants, enthusiasm might well be spent. The very name taken by the Moravian Church — that of the "Unitas Fratrum," the "United Brethren" — clearly shows the Moravian dream. It was that of a company whose every member sunk his individuality, not because he must but because he chose, in the whole; and whose every member contributed, through his observance of whatever rules the "whole" might make, to the dream's fulfilment. Moreover, as rules might change at the decision of the authorities whom the Church itself set up, the dulness and deadness of mere conformity, as ordinarily understood, was yet further relieved, though conformity still retained the place of ultimate sovereignty. In the light of such considerations as these, the puzzle of enthusiasm for a Conformist ideal grows less strange than at first it appeared. Also, from this point of view, it is possible to understand why a firm and even passionate attachment to the doctrine of justification by faith—from which attachment the natural line of progress would seem to be along a road leading at last to the exaltation of life over organisation, in other words to the true Nonconformist ideal—failed in this instance to point the way. It was under the dominance of the Church-ideal already in possession—the ideal of a willingly-disciplined brotherhood — that the evangelical doctrine was read and understood. Whatever suggestions as to a Church-ideal most in harmony with itself the evangelical doctrine might offer were not explored. To Moravianism, justification by faith was the porch through which men passed on into the self-

disciplined brotherhood already set up as the building-in-chief; and—if one may so put it—the porch came in for a share of the enthusiasm which the building-in-chief had already inspired. But that was all. As has been said, Moravianism, though doctrinally evangelical on all the initial and cardinal points, did not systematise doctrine or indeed care for it to any considerable extent. It was not in that direction that its predominant interests lay. Indeed, the peculiarities and extravagances by which Moravian hymns have sometimes offended the general taste—the curiously rhapsodical style in which the soul's relations to Christ have sometimes been spoken of in Moravian utterances—may be traced to this fact. There has not been sufficient theological interest or a sufficiently penetrating theological thought, to make aberrations in theological utterance appear what they are. All that justification by faith in Christ involves was ardently loved, but it was not thought out. Zeal for it was hardly according to knowledge. Undoubtedly even this imperfect zeal for it has saved Moravianism from many of the ills to which a Conformist Church wherein no such zeal existed might easily have fallen a prey. But the doctrine, nevertheless, was rather loved than grasped. It was but the porch to be passed through. Moravianism was primarily enthusiastic for the "disciplined brotherhood" idea: this made it enthusiastic for evangelical doctrine, since that doctrine showed the first individual step toward the idea's embodiment in actual fact; but on this ordering of things, it was after all in the end a Conformist Church, albeit an enthusiastic and an evangelical one, that appeared upon the religious stage. That verdict is compelled; though the delivery of it must always be accompanied by a rider doing justice to the fact that exemplary practical Christianity—and most of all untiring zeal for the evangelisation of the world—have made Moravianism stand out as a city set on a hill.

This much it was necessary to say in order to indicate Moravianism's general attitude and place. Of its coming to England a brief account will suffice. Zinzendorf himself came over in 1737, though on at least two previous occasions Moravian visitors had set foot upon our soil. The Count's

object was to further the missionary work on which the Brethren had always been so eagerly bent, the immediate question being whether those already settled in Georgia should be entrusted with a contemplated enterprise in South Carolina. A German Society was formed as a result of Zinzendorf's visit; and by degrees English adherents came in. The position of the Moravians was rendered easier than it might otherwise have been by the fact that episcopacy was part of the Moravian scheme; and although for the sake of security they registered their buildings for Nonconformist worship under the Toleration Act, the authorities of the English Church were never much disposed to frown. The Moravians—who, like the Quakers, objected to taking the oaths necessary before toleration could be enjoyed—sought for exemption in 1748, and obtained it with much less difficulty than the Quakers had experienced;[1] and in the following year, the Bishop of Sodor and Man consented to become superintendent over the Brethren at their own request.[2] The Bishop's great age rendered the arrangement practically inoperative; but the ease with which the Moravians had secured their release from the burden of the oaths, and the Bishop's readiness to help them, show that it was in pleasant places the lines had fallen to them on the whole. Numbers grew. Two of the members of the "Holy Club"—Gambold and Ingham—joined the body, as we saw.[3] Bedford, Pudsey, and Fulneck[4] near Leeds, saw Moravian congregations set up. Schools came into existence here and there. And although later in the century troublous times befell, and through the faithlessness or worse of some members scandal and shame came in, recovery followed upon distress; and Moravianism has maintained itself with honour in England from its coming until now. It has—as would be expected from the special circumstances of its origin—run alongside of English religious life rather than mingled in any way with it. The character of a foreign sojourner in our midst it has never lost. But it has a right to a place in

[1] Hutton, *History of the Moravian Church* (2nd ed.), pp. 343-345.
[2] Hutton, *A Short History of the Moravian Church*, p. 212.
[3] *Supra*, p. 215.
[4] "Lamb's Hill was the original name. "Fulneck" was a designation transferred from a place in Moravia.

"concrete Nonconformity"—and more especially to a place in that particularist Nonconformity whose rise this section records.

Passing to the smaller and less important particularist movements belonging to our period, the "Johnsonians"—practically forgotten as they are to-day—may have the first glance. They take their name from John Johnson, a man born in 1706 at Lostock in Lancashire, and identified with the General Baptists in his youth.[1] The process of change by which he travelled from his earliest platform was, so far as it can be followed, much the same as that whereby many other General Baptists passed from lower to higher levels when the influence of the Evangelical Revival stirred them.[2] One writer somewhat curiously speaks of, or rather alludes to, the Johnsonians as a branch of the Sandemanians;[3] but it is no more than a bare allusion that he makes: he offers no justification for ranking them as he does; and there is nothing in Johnson's writings that could make the characterisation fit. On the surface, indeed, no discoverable reason appears for Johnson's severance from the General Baptists, or rather for his aloofness from the General Baptist New Connexion to which the General Baptist Revival gave birth. Yet somehow or other he became the titular leader of a separate sect. On closer scrutiny, however, a possible solution appears. Johnson passed, as the re-vivified General Baptists passed, from extreme Arminianism to a Calvinism which, though accepting the doctrine of election, modified it by holding that God's election was "according to foreknowledge"; but it would seem that while the bulk of the Baptist New Connexion did so more or less reluctantly, Johnson did so eagerly, and came to take insistence upon this Calvinism, modified though it was, as the supremely necessary thing and as the central motive on which Christian thought and Christian preaching should settle down. This being so, he had to take his own course. The Calvinistic Baptists he

[1] On Johnson and the Johnsonians consult the *History of a Forgotten Sect of Baptised Believers*, edited by Robert Dawbarn, which contains memoirs of Johnson and Reynoldson and extracts from their writings; and *Samuel Fisher*, by Edward Deacon.

[2] *Supra*, pp. 252, 253.

[3] Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, iii. 267.

could not join, partly because not even the enthusiasm of his new Calvinistic advocacy could compensate in their eyes for the fault that his Calvinism was not sufficiently high (it will be remembered that the defence of "high" Calvinism was just at this time one of the chief works on which the Calvinistic Baptists were engaged[1]), and partly because his views on the Person of Christ, like those of the Baptist New Connexion, did not permit him to take the full Trinitarian formula upon his lips. On other doctrinal points, too, divergence between Johnson and the Calvinistic Baptists might have been found too great for any association to be set up. Johnson accordingly went his way. He did not have to traverse it altogether alone; for in both individuals and Churches good ground was found for his seed; and at least two other ministers of his creed, Robert Reynoldson and Samuel Fisher, reached to something like a limited fame. Johnson's own ministry was carried on in Liverpool, whither he removed in 1740; but it was in the eastern counties that the majority of his disciples were placed; and in this region men and women calling themselves by Johnson's name maintained their Churches for about a hundred years. To-day—save for one or two who lovingly cherish Johnson's name[2]—the sect is dead; and the historian, as he explores the old roads of religion's pilgrimage, has merely to remark the little grass-grown side-track up which Johnsonianism broke away, to pick up the few relics it has left on that narrow path, and to note that they bear "particularist Nonconformity's" sign.

The name of Benjamin Ingham we have met with before on the roll of the Oxford "Holy Club"; and we have noted also that he joined the Moravians to leave them again.[3] His association with them, however, lasted a considerable time: his propaganda on their behalf was fervent while it endured; and his admiration for them was strong enough to keep him faithful to them even after Wesley had broken away. But severance at last came, though precise reasons or details are not known. Thereupon Ingham formed

[1] *Supra*, p. 251.
[2] See, for instance, Dawbarn's book mentioned in a former note.
[3] *Supra*, p. 215.

"Inghamite" congregations of his own, some few of which still survive.[1] In doctrine, and very largely in government, Ingham's Churches resembled those of Wesleyan Methodism: probably, indeed, only the coolness (it was no more) which had come between Wesley and Ingham when the former left Moravianism and the second stayed on, prevented Ingham from joining the Methodist ranks. But this was not the end of Ingham's chequered career. The story has to be completed by saying that Ingham by-and-by quarrelled with most of the Churches he had himself set up. Unfortunately, becoming interested in Glas and Sandeman,[2] he sent two of his followers into Scotland to enquire into their doctrines: his messengers returned complete converts to the system they had investigated; and so came what Romaine —who had been a great admirer of Ingham, and had even thought of identifying himself with his Society[3]—termed that "blast out of the north" which drove the fair fellowship apart. Ingham did not actually adopt Sandemanianism, but he certainly moved far from the platform he had previously occupied; and the new tone of autocratic authority he adopted defeated its own end. His right to use it was nearly everywhere called in question, and his power was gone. Only thirteen of his congregations remained faithful to him: the rest, sheep without a shepherd, were scattered abroad. The story is a sad one. But for that matter, the annals of particularist Nonconformity contain many such. And it is as an incident in those annals that it has to be told.

The "Sandemanians," a larger body than either the Johnsonians or the Inghamites, but smaller and less influential than the Moravians, may conclude the present list.[4] Their founder in England was Robert Sandeman, after whom the English congregations are named; but the real origin of the body belongs to Scotland, where John Glas had been driven from the Church of Scotland about 1728, and where

[1] For Ingham and the Inghamites, see Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists*, pp. 57-154; *Dictionary of National Biography*, art. "Ingham."

[2] See next paragraph.

[3] Tyerman, *The Oxford Methodists*, p. 140.

[4] For Sandemanianism, see Sandeman's own writings; article on Sandeman in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 434-447.

"Glassites" is the title by which the communion is known. Sandeman was an elder in one of the Glassite Societies; and it was through his writings—commencing about 1757—that the Glassite tenets became familiar in the south. Perhaps the peculiar interpretation of faith is the point of chief singularity in the doctrines of the sect. Faith, according to the Glassite or Sandemanian view, is nothing more nor less than a purely intellectual assent to the idea that Christ lived and died for the justification of sinful men; and to suggest that anything in the nature of a movement of the heart, as distinct from a movement of the brain, can be necessary or even useful to salvation is error of errors according to this scheme. This conception was contended for with a warmth and passion in direct proportion to the coldness (as one would think it) of the conception itself: indeed, bitterness in controversy was in this propaganda carried to extremes. Besides insisting on the cardinal point of doctrine mentioned, Sandemanianism set up various rules for Church government, from which rules no one must stir a hand's-span either to the right hand or to the left. In the main the Church order follows, at any rate externally, the Independent model. But punctilio is heaped upon punctilio. Pastors must be married, but must never marry twice. The decisions of a Church-meeting must be unanimous, but unanimity is secured by turning a recalcitrant minority out. New members receive the kiss of charity on admission. For many matters of private behaviour, too, set regulations are framed. To eat anything that has been killed by having its neck wrung is strictly prohibited. Any form of amusement which involves chance is also forbidden, not because the lot is profane, but because it is sacred to God. Property can only be held subject to the needs and interest —and must ever be ready at the call—of the whole Church. The entire scheme, it will be seen, rests upon a literalism in the interpretation of Scripture which, although different in its results, is as exact and painstaking—even if one must also add as dull and dry—as that of many other religious bodies has been. One would hardly suppose that a system wearing such a stern and hard-featured countenance as this would draw many to its arms; yet Sandeman's writings made no inconsiderable number of converts in England; and

Samuel Pike, a congregational minister of Thames Street in London, having begun by tilting against Sandeman in the press, ended by warmly espousing the views he had endeavoured to overthrow.[1] Nor was he the only one who turned to the new evangel; so that before Sandemanian Churches were set up in England, various Sandemanian adherents were dotted here and there. In 1760, Sandeman himself removed to London, establishing a Church of the order in Glovers' Hall, and afterwards passing with it to the old Quaker meeting-place at the "Bull and Mouth." Pike, it should be said, relinquished his Congregational pastorate in 1765, and joined the Church which his admired apostle had set up, afterwards becoming minister of a Sandemanian fellowship at Trowbridge. Thus the new denomination was launched upon its way, starting a career which is steadily, if not very vigorously, maintained to-day. Controversies and divisions were to come within its borders, whereof brief mention, though no more, may presently be made;[2] but for the moment we may be satisfied with having seen Sandemanianism established, and turn our gaze away.

So the present list may close. Perhaps it should be said that the doctrines of Swedenborg had during this period been obtaining some currency and some acceptance with a few—chiefly because a clergyman of the Church of England, named Hartley, had translated some of Swedenborg's works. But the first actual Swedenborgian Church dates from 1788, a year after the close of the period we are watching; and nothing like extension took place for many years. Consideration of Swedenborgianism may therefore be postponed. And now, the parenthesis passed, we may resume our study of the return made by the older Nonconformity towards its first ideal, though not forgetting what the parenthesis has taught us—that "particularist Nonconformity," as embodied in the denominations at which we have glanced, was now side by side with the older Nonconformity upon the field. For its presence there—quite apart from the intrinsic interest possessed or lacked by its special denominational embodiments—becomes a factor in the larger situation we are

[1] Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, ii. 92-96.

[2] *Infra*, p. 336.

endeavouring to grasp. And we may say at once that while its right to a place in the record of concrete Nonconformity cannot be denied, the historian of the Nonconformist spirit—as he reckons up the things which have made or marred that spirit's success—cannot look upon it with very friendly eyes.

CHAPTER II

THE REPEAL OF THE ACTS

SECTION 1

Nonconformity and the Law

AUTHORITIES.—Lecky's *History of England in The Eighteenth Century* helps us through only part of the period, but Massey's *History of England from the Accession to the Death of George the Third* covers all but the last eight years. May's *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* is very useful. Stanhope's *Life of Pitt* assists materially to a grasp of the political situation, but the two books of Dr. Holland Rose, *Pitt and National Revival* and *Pitt and the Great War* form the finest extant study of the time. On the more distinctly religious side, Stoughton's original *History of Religion in England* concludes with 1800, but is carried on in his *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, a work scarcely so full and rich as the previous one, but nevertheless very valuable. Dale's *History of English Congregationalism* and Ivimey's *History of the English Baptists* may be referred to for the bearing of events on the two denominations they deal with, though Ivimey ends with the death of the third George.

THE quickening of religion among the Nonconformists had signalised, or, rather, had itself constituted, the first step of Nonconformity on its homeward way. It was only to be expected that, having re-found itself so far, Nonconformity should pursue the quest yet further, and should return upon that effort for a casting off of its remaining chains which it had practically suspended for so long. The idea of striving for a repeal of the remaining anti-Nonconformist laws could not but display itself as a star to be followed once more. Completer toleration had been a platform which it had passed and on which it had stood for a while as it came down; and in the natural order of things it stepped upon that platform again as it went back. And although, as has been said, its first step backward, upward, and home did not immediately or directly suggest the second, yet indirectly

after all the suggestion was made. For Nonconformity, in its new and warmer self-consciousness, would naturally ask itself in what way its essential purpose and mission were to be further fulfilled; and as it asked, out of its own past the suggestion of a struggle for greater freedom emerged.

That struggle, accordingly, Nonconformity now took up once more. Even now its energy for the conflict was not perfectly restored: even now it needed—after two or three years had exhausted the fresh impulse by which it was stirred—the spur of attack before it could quit itself with complete demonstration of its power; but it had such reserves, such potentialities of spirit, that on each occasion of attack it did more than beat the attack down, and went on to make a vigorous counter-attack in its turn. Whereas, in the period we have just reviewed, Nonconformity had been content with repelling assaults and throwing up entrenchments at the points of manifest danger, in the period on which we are now entering it came forth from behind the bulwarks—after these had proved themselves impregnable and the ordeal was over—to pursue the retreating foe.

The general situation, however, cannot be understood unless it be realised that Nonconformity's struggle was greatly helped by the growing general tendency towards the removal of restrictions upon, or penalties for, liberty of thought and dissidence from established standards. More than once, as this history has proceeded, we have noticed how this tendency—this secular tendency, so to call it, not born out of religious principle, but rather out of that natural progress of the human mind which was bound to produce it at last—has, after making its germinal appearance as a philosophical speculation, permeated with its influence into the common mental attitude till it has become a tendency indeed. At the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth its life had been long enough to give it a very considerable hold; while the appearance of newspapers, now an established institution,[1] naturally enlarged its opportunities

[1] For particulars as to the origin of various newspapers, consult H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers.*

and its range. Of course it marked some minds far less vividly than others: it had much to fight with, both in that older tendency to exclusiveness and bigotry with which it is still maintaining its age-long and unfinished battle, and in the recurrence of circumstances which—because they seemed to make breadth and liberality dangerous—reinforced with fictitious plausibility the older tendency's case. This last point, in fact, counts for a good deal in the years with which we are dealing; for the French Revolution, throwing large classes of Englishmen into terror, even though the terror were but a few years' madness, lest what was happening in France should repeat itself here, did much—besides confirming the other tendency in possession of the minds it already held—to prevent the liberal-religious tendency from getting free play upon minds which were otherwise ready to let themselves drift down upon its stream. But the tendency was there. The leading politicians could not but feel the touch of the new spirit; and we shall see the new spirit causing many of them to assume a new attitude towards the Nonconformist claims when Nonconformists put them forward, and causing some of them even to take the initiative when Nonconformists made no move. That the riot and blood-streaked chaos across the Channel should affect statesmen and their action differently according to position and temperament, and according as the roar of the French catastrophe sounded lower or higher in imagination's ears, is what we should expect. Burke, who thundered against a Revolution in which he could see nothing but evil, steeled himself steadfastly against liberal-religious legislation at home. Fox, who lauded to the skies a Revolution in which he could see nothing but good, as steadfastly upheld the liberal-religious cause. Pitt's attitude is not to be so briefly described. By nature he leaned to the liberal-religious side; but he was also constitutionally cautious, and we shall see him at the outset restraining his natural bent in the liberal-religious direction because he had allowed himself to be persuaded that yielding was unsafe. Then—when his early non-committal or guardedly-approving attitude to the Revolution had changed, and he had realised that it was something more and something worse than the mere temporary dis-

placement of existing conditions, followed by speedy restoration of order and prosperity, which he had taken it to be—we shall see him finding in that disillusionment of his new reasons why his native leaning to complete religious liberty should be checked. Then, with the terror of the Revolution passed, and his native instinct allowed for once to have its way, we shall see him giving up place and power because he could not carry through the liberal-religious legislation which both preference and wisdom seemed at the time to dictate. And then we shall see him, back in place and power, once more restraining his instinct to the liberal-religious side because his previous failure made it seem unwise to indulge the instinct again, so preventing history from counting him among the victorious champions of the cause after all. Through all these vicissitudes, brought upon it by individual temperament or by circumstances in the mass, the general tendency to breadth, latitudinarianism, perfect toleration and freedom—call it what one may—had to pass. Through all the difficulties thus suggested it had to make its way. But it was there. Even Lord North—whom we found, in the subscription debate of 1772, giving an unexpected sign that the more liberal spirit had in passing at any rate brushed him with its wings[1]—was in 1792 to give a still more unexpected and striking sign of being lightly touched again.[2] Assuredly the tendency was there. And that is the essential thing to note, since its presence had no little to do with Nonconformity's fate and fortune in days to come.

At the very beginning of the period the Nonconformists, with the ardour for larger freedom strong upon them, made three attempts, in three successive years, to have the burden of the Test and Corporation Acts lifted from their backs. Mr. Beaufoy introduced a Bill having that object in March 1787. Pitt was in the fourth year of his eighteen years' tenure of the Treasury; and though on the one hand his caution in reform was well known, and he was holding office largely by means of Tory support, his desire for reform along sound lines was undoubted, so that the Nonconformists might reasonably hope to find him at any rate neutral if not on

[1] *Supra*, p. 269. [2] *Infra*, p. 294.

their side.[1] The Dissenting Deputies, indeed, who were the prime movers in the matter, had interviewed both Pitt and Fox, and had come away from the presence of the first named with a conviction that, while he might not actively help, he would not actively hinder.[2] That Fox would support the Nonconformist plea was well understood; so that the omens were favourable on the whole. But the antagonistic forces proved too strong. Lord North used the language which has since his time grown familiar upon the lips of the defenders of exclusiveness when he spoke of the Acts as "the great bulwark of the constitution," and tried somewhat lamely to prove that the Test Act was liberty's real guard; while Pitt, caution being in the ascendant, declared that while he held Dissenters in the highest esteem, he was bound to declare against their relief. Pitt's attitude was the result of a communication he had received from Archbishop Moore[3] in answer to an enquiry as to the views held by the episcopal bench. The great majority of the Bishops, Moore reported, were resolved that the Acts must be maintained;[4] and Pitt accordingly suppressed his own preferences, attempting also to suppress any sign that they had been suppressed. By a majority of 78, spite of Fox's pleading, leave to introduce the Bill was refused.[5] Next year, though the hostile majority was no more than 20, the result was the same.[6] A more dashing and brilliant field-day was arranged for 1790, when Fox himself appeared as the champion of the Nonconformist cause. But this time the adverse majority went up instead of down, for reasons not difficult to perceive. The previous defeats had stimulated Nonconformist energies all over the country; and in meeting after meeting it had been shown—by demands for the repeal of all other anti-Noncon-

[1] On Pitt's general position, consult specially *William Pitt and National Revival*, by J. Holland Rose; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*; Massey, *History of England during the Reign of George the Third*.

[2] *Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Dissenting Deputies* (ed. 1814), p. 59.

[3] Archbishop of Canterbury from 1783 to 1805.

[4] Stanhope, *Life of Pitt* (ed. 1879), i. 267; *Anecdotes of the Life of Bishop Watson*, pp. 161-163.

[5] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 477, 478; *Journals of the House of Commons*, xlii. 613; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxvi. 780-832.

[6] Bogue and Bennett, as cited, ii. 478; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxviii. 1-41.

formist laws as well as the Test and Corporation Acts, and even in some cases by demands for the end of the State Church as such—that the withholding of what they asked for had only roused Nonconformists to ask for more.[1] With all this the opponents of repeal were able to make effective play when the debate came on; while the first flush of fear at the French Revolution induced them also to point out that some Dissenters—the redoubtable Priestley before all others—had openly avowed sympathy with the new and destructive French ideas. Burke brought all his eloquence to bear against repeal—though it must be added that he proposed to substitute for the taking of the Lord's Supper according to the Church of England rites a Declaration that the Establishment was in harmony with God's law and must not be in any way attacked. Pitt displayed a strengthened antagonism, for his first refusal to take fright at the French happenings was giving way. Wilberforce declared "it is a question of Establishment or no Establishment now." And a majority of 189 (294 – 105) proved in the end that the battle, strenuously fought as under Fox's fiery leadership it had been, was utterly lost.[2]

With these three futile endeavours, the new Nonconformist impulse was temporarily spent. For a number of years—till 1812—the Nonconformists as a whole lay quiet. The circumstances, it must be remembered, were altogether special; and the temporary suspension of Nonconformist activity does not mean that Nonconformity was uninterested or afraid, or even that it was unfit for anything in the nature of aggressive war. Events were to show by-and-by that it was none of these things. It was not now, in respect of capacity for and inclination towards a daring policy, as it had been in the period we last surveyed. Its passing phase of quietude merely signified that a new factor had entered into the situation, and that fresh calculations must be made. This was prudent tactics, not a retreat under the push of fear. Round about the Nonconformists was rising the panic which caught the nation as institutions were seen tumbling

[1] *Sketch of the History and Proceedings, etc.* (ed. 1814), pp. 61, 62.

[2] Bogue and Bennett, as former note, ii. 479-481; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxviii. 387-452.

headlong, destroying nobles and sovereigns in their fall, across the narrow strip of sea. And although with the leading minds in the country, as for instance with Pitt himself, the panic speedily passed away, with the masses of the people, and even with the less enlightened of the politicians, it endured. Even when with these last the immediate fear had vanished, and they no longer expected to find the Constitution crashing about their ears, the fear left behind it a reluctance to move along the path of change, and a dislike of those by whom change was sought. It was hardly a time for proposing the removal of restrictions here, when in the name of liberty such crime was running riot there—all the more as some Nonconformists, cheering rapturously the name of liberty and forgetting to condemn the crime, made the Nonconformist cause suspect.[1] Priestley, indeed, paid heavily for his unwisdom, having his house destroyed by the Birmingham mob in 1791, and feeling compelled, notwithstanding that Nonconformists of all denominations declared warm sympathy with him in his troubles (this sympathy with him in his troubles not at all implying, in the majority of cases, sympathy with his views) to seek refuge in America three years later on.[2] If one is hardly surprised that many Nonconformists, having themselves suffered so much and so long under tyranny, should applaud the overthrow of a tyrannical government without seeing that much besides the tyrannical government was being overthrown, one cannot be surprised either that their applause should make the authorities inclined to frown. So, at any rate, it happened. And under public suspicion and under authority's frown, Nonconformity, so far as claim or prayer were concerned, held its peace. The tendency to bigotry and exclusiveness had unexpectedly obtained allies which made it too strong, and for the time it ruled the field.

Yet the other tendency gave signs of life ; and through the years in which the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was no longer agitated, that other tendency asserted itself sufficiently to try something, and was able even to

[1] See on this Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 399-402.

[2] Rutt, *Life and Correspondence of Dr. Priestley*, ii. 116, 208, 225.

accomplish something, if that something was much less than it dared to try. We can watch it, in fact, raising itself from beneath the multitude of circumstances which might well have stifled it, and now and then, as has been said, showing not only tenacity of life but initiative as well. Initiative it showed when in 1789 Lord Stanhope[1] attempted in the Lords to repeal the Acts which punished people for not attending Church and for speaking in depreciation of the Prayer Book, characterising the said Acts as "rubbish" which he proposed to remove by wheelbarrows if their Lordships would not have it done by carts, or, if wheelbarrows were also forbidden, then by the slower work of spades. The attempt failed, but the making of it is noteworthy.[2] The liberal tendency proved its high courage when in 1792 Fox ventured to propose the removal from the Statute Book of the Acts which made denial of the Trinity a penal offence;[3] and perhaps one of the most remarkable signs of its existence is the fact that Lord North supported the Bill (though Burke's feverish opposition carried the day) on the so far sensible ground that while he was opposed to any extension of the privileges which Nonconformists already possessed, he was in favour of levelling up the privileges of all to the highest line reached by the privileges of any, and that to punish a man for merely holding erroneous opinions was foolish and wrong.[4] Of course the Acts thus assailed by Lord Stanhope and Fox were—it may be well to remind the reader—in practice obsolete, which makes Lord Stanhope's description of one set of them as "rubbish" all the more apt. But the liberal tendency naturally could not endure that such penalties as they provided should still have the sanction of law, nominal as it might be. It was, however, in connection with the Roman Catholics that the liberal tendency gave most signal tokens of its growth; and although Catholic Emancipation is not among our principal concerns, the matter calls for notice since some of the suggestions made

[1] Charles, third Earl. See *supra*, p. 185 note.

[2] *Journals of the House of Lords*, xxxviii. 422; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxviii. 101-133.

[3] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* (3rd ed.), iii. 108-110; Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxix. 1372-1403.

[4] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxix. 1398.

on behalf of the Romanists touched the Nonconformists too. Not that much was actually done for Roman Catholic relief up to the time when in 1812 the Nonconformists bestirred themselves vigorously again. The only actual concession made was the admission of Catholics (always provided that they took the oath of allegiance, and repudiated the Pope's authority in temporal affairs) to the legal profession in England and their relief from certain disabilities as to property and education with which the Act of 1778[1] still loaded them, in 1791.[2] It is not in what was actually achieved, but in proposals emanating from quarters whence one would hardly have anticipated their coming, that the liberal-religious tendency showed its strength. We must remember, also, that to make such proposals on behalf of Romanists revealed a courage which in its turn revealed how powerful the liberal-religious tendency must have been. For while some of the most conservative in the nation may have been induced to think more kindly of the Roman Church just because the French revolutionaries had assailed it, and because it had shared the fate of the French monarchy in France (Burke, for instance, firm as he was in resisting concessions to Nonconformists, was on the favourable side when concession to Catholics was on the board), the bulk of the people were not accessible to considerations like these. To the majority, Catholicism was still the thrice-accursed thing. But the liberal-religious tendency was strong enough in some to face the risk. Under the Test Act and other laws the Catholics were still excluded from the army and the navy, from municipal office, and from the magistrates' bench. The Union between Ireland and England in 1800 brought up the question of the Catholic position in a good many ways; for the Irish Parliament had in 1793 passed an Act enabling Catholics to hold commissions up to colonel's rank[3]—with the result that a man who was entitled to act as an officer

[1] *Supra*, p. 270.

[2] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* (3rd ed.), iii. 106, 107; Amherst, *History of Catholic Emancipation 1771–1820*, i. 149 ff.; Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), vi. 41-43. See also on the whole topic *Cambridge Modern History*, x. chap. 19.

[3] May, as previous note, iii. 111; Lecky, *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), iii. 179.

in Ireland might be arrested if a transfer of his regiment made it his duty to come across the Irish Sea. Anomalies such as these Pitt, when his Act of Union was through, was anxious to remove; and one of the most remarkable exemplifications of the triumph of the liberal-religious spirit in a mind naturally cautious was given when in 1801 Pitt—the terror of the French Revolution over so far as he was concerned—formulated a plan for the entire abolition of all religious tests in respect of service under the Crown and of municipal or magisterial posts. Had the plan been carried out, both Romanists and Nonconformists would have secured what they had to wait years to gain. But the King, still bigoted as he had always been, would have none of it, and Pitt resigned.[1] One has to add with regret that when he came back to office in 1804—recalled because everybody in England felt that he was the one man to save the country from experiencing the fulfilment of Napoleon's vengeful threats—caution had suppressed the livelier movements of the liberal-religious spirit in him once more; and a year later, when Fox moved that Romanists should be admitted to Parliament, Pitt, though confessing agreement in theory, declared that he would never do anything to agitate the question or help its settlement again. For him it was dead.[2] Whether Pitt would have remained upon this ground had his career been prolonged may be doubted; but he had no opportunity of moving, for January of 1806 saw the close of his political career and of his life.[3] In the Grenville ministry which entered office at Pitt's death the liberal-religious tendency showed itself once more in the introduction of a Bill which practically went as far as Pitt's intentions of 1801 had stretched, and which would have opened all lines of service under the Crown to Catholics and Nonconformists alike, so long as the practice of their religion did not interfere with due discharge of the duties they undertook. But the King laid his hand on Grenville as he had laid it on Pitt, and Grenville resigned as Pitt had resigned before him.[4]

[1] Stanhope, *Life of Pitt* (ed. 1879), ii. 383 ff.; May, as former note, iii. 118 ff.; Massey, *History of England during the Reign of George the Third*, iv. 289 ff. [2] Stanhope, *Life of Pitt* (ed. 1879), iii. 328-330.

[3] Stanhope, as previous note, iii. 388-394.

[4] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* (3rd ed.), iii. 126-128.

Little, it will be seen, had been actually done; and although Catholic claims continued to be steadily pressed, nothing more was done for some years to come. But it is worth remembering—and is not remembered as it should be—that two Prime Ministers of England relinquished office in the beginning of the nineteenth century because they were prepared to go far in the direction of granting the Catholic and the Nonconformist demand. Certainly the liberal-religious spirit was making its mark.

But, this said, we have to return to the fact that upon Nonconformists in the country at large, or in many parts of it, the contrary spirit was working its will. Of course at the time when even Pitt was so far ridden by the terror which the French Revolution had inspired as to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, to interfere with the right of public meeting, and to attempt the muzzling of the press,[1] they had to bear a special share of hardship and, besides suffering in all ways —trade boycotting and the like—which malice could invent, they had in some places been compelled to barricade their houses and arm themselves lest what had happened to Priestley should happen to them.[2] But even after the cooler heads had come back to reason, and the vanished nightmares were being laughed at by those who had awakened—when Pitt was nearly reaching to his widely tolerant idea of 1801, nay, after he had reached it and sacrificed power for its sake —oppression and persecution, if on a smaller scale, still went on. Magistrates, obsessed with the old and ever-recurring conviction that Nonconformists were disloyal, were reviving the Conventicle Act; and under this and other laws, supposed to have become obsolete long since, men and women were being heavily fined for no worse offence than that of attending prayer-meetings, and treated with a severity which suggested that the days of the second Charles might soon return in their glory or their shame.[3] For the time being, and for the reasons given above, Nonconformists endured in quietness; but they hid all these things in their

[1] Massey, *History of England during the Reign of George the Third*, iii. 338 ff.; May, as former note, ii. 288 ff.; iii. 12 ff.

[2] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, p. 404; Rutt, *Life and Letters of Dr. Priestley*, ii. 173.

[3] Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, p. 48.

hearts; and these things were presently remembered, and went to swell the account, when Nonconformity, under a sudden access of provocation, was stirred to kick against the goad. In fine, therefore, we see Nonconformity—after its three previously-noted efforts for repeal of the obnoxious Acts had drained its stock of strength, and the French Revolution had with its sudden and catastrophic influence thrown out all the calculations which might in more normal times have held good—compelled to recognise that, while the liberal-religious tendency and spirit were undoubtedly upon the field, the older tendency and spirit were for the time being too strongly entrenched to be driven out, and accordingly refraining from political self-assertion on any large scale. One section of the Nonconformists — the Quakers —did indeed renew in 1796 an endeavour we saw them making sixty years before,[1] an endeavour to have distraint for tithe recognised as an adequate penalty when voluntary payment was refused, so that imprisonment should not be suffered as well as forfeiture of goods; but the almost contemptuous rejection of their demand in two successive years[2] perhaps went to prove that the bulk of Nonconformists, in abstaining from any forwardness of claim, were reading the situation aright. So, at any rate, the bulk of Nonconformists read it. After the sortie under Fox in 1790, Nonconformity kept to its tents.

But any one who imagined that this was due to indifference or to incapacity for offensive action was greatly deceived, as was shown in due time. Nonconformity, in fact, had its hand upon the sword, even though, for reasons satisfactory to itself, it was refraining from an actual stroke; and it was now to be proved that the Nonconformists, as stated at the commencement of this section, were prepared to meet any attack, not only by successful defence, but by counter-attack. The attack which roused them was made in 1811 by Lord Sidmouth's introduction into the House of Lords of a Bill whose effect would have been greatly to reduce the number of licences granted under the Toleration Act. To the conditions already in force Lord Sidmouth wished to add

[1] *Supra*, p. 183.

[2] Cobbett, *Parliamentary History*, xxxii. 1022-1026, 1508-1516.

a new condition to the effect that the minister of a settled congregation must, before he was permitted to exercise his ministry, produce testimony as to his respectability and capability from six substantial householders belonging to his Church, while itinerant preachers must similarly have their six witnesses at their backs to declare that their life and character were without reproach and that they were qualified to preach.[1] Lord Sidmouth, it is fair to say, dissociated himself from any wish to injure Dissent: indeed, he declared that his object was rather to make Dissent more respectable and to save the Dissenters from themselves; this being necessary, according to the noble lord, inasmuch as "cobblers, tailors, pig-drivers, and chimney-sweepers" were numerous in the Dissenters' preaching ranks. These sentences in Lord Sidmouth's speech, in fact, recalled Bishop Hall's contemptuous reference, made just one hundred and seventy years before, to the "cobblers, tailors, and such-like trash," being the "guides fit for them," by whom the London sectaries were taught.[2] And the circumstances precedent to Lord Sidmouth's speech, notwithstanding his lordship's disclaimer, indicate clearly enough that Bishop Hall's spirit was behind the new depreciation of Nonconformist preachers as it had been behind the old. As to the actual facts, Lord Sidmouth was not without some justification. Undoubtedly many of the itinerating preachers in the villages were men at whom culture might sneer and from whom a fastidious taste would turn away; though this is not to deny that in them and through them the weak things of the world often brought to nought the strong. But granting the facts, the obvious reply to Lord Sidmouth was that the equipment of a Nonconformist preacher was a Nonconformist concern—a reply made often enough as the debate went on. And certainly some of those behind Lord Sidmouth were moved, not by any care that the Nonconformist ministry should be properly equipped, but by an intention to cripple it still more. As far back as 1800 Bishop Horsley had made the

[1] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860*, iii. 134, 135; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xix. 1133-1140; Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 45-47; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 17-21. For Lord Sidmouth's side of the matter, consult Pellew, *Life and Correspondence of Viscount Sidmouth*, iii. 38 ff.

[2] Vol. I. p. 296.

tocsin swing out the old notes—that religion was being endangered by the existence of great numbers of conventicles, that Nonconformist zeal for orthodoxy was a sham covering treasonable political designs, that Nonconformist Sunday Schools were corrupting the loyalty of youth, that the "illiterate peasant or mechanic" who preached the Gospel was really a revolutionary agent in disguise—and so on up and down the whole ridiculous scale.[1] Nor was Horsley alone; and we know, both from Wilberforce and from a speech made by Lord Redesdale when the Sidmouth Bill was under discussion, that Bishop Pretyman of Lincoln had at an earlier stage talked over a similar, if not a stronger, Bill with Pitt.[2] Lord Sidmouth, whatever his own private ideas may have been, was doing the work of men who meant to make another effort at beating Nonconformity down. But they found themselves baffled. The operations preliminary to the battle—a motion by Lord Sidmouth in 1810 for a return of Nonconformist licences issued from 1780 to 1808,[3] and his lordship's announcement in the same year of his intended Bill[4]—had roused Nonconformists all over the country: the Three Denominations and the Dissenting Deputies held meetings, published resolutions, and approached the Government:[5] the Methodists, at whose itinerating preachers the proposed law struck with special force, waxed justifiably angry and ardent: the table of the House of Lords groaned under a mountain of petitions, to which Lord Stanhope pointed as having already smothered the Bill; and in the end—many influential peers having spoken on the negative side, and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Charles Manners Sutton) having declared that while the Bill's objects were in themselves laudable, the Dissenters were the best judges of their own business, and that therefore the Bill ought not to be pressed—the ill-starred measure collapsed "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung," except by

[1] In a charge to the clergy of the Rochester diocese (*Charges of Samuel Horsley*, pp. 144-148).

[2] *Life of William Wilberforce*, by R. I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce (Bishop), iii. 512; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xx. 197, 198; Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 42, 43.

[3] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xv. 633.

[4] *Ibid.* xvii. 750.

[5] Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, p. 45; *Sketch of History and Proceedings of the Dissenting Deputies* (ed. 1814), pp. 106 ff.

Lord Sidmouth's pathetic wail that his benevolent intentions had been most sadly misunderstood.[1] For defence, at any rate, the Nonconformists had proved themselves amply strong.

But now came the counter-attack. Immediately after the defeat of the Sidmouth Bill the "Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty" was established;[2] and at once the new association, in conjunction with the Dissenting Deputies, entered upon aggressive work. The Nonconformists had felt and found their power; and they were now determined that the teeth of the old Acts of Restoration days, whose sharpness they had lately been made to feel,[3] must once for all be effectually drawn. The repeal of the Five Mile and Conventicle Acts was resolved upon; and it says much for the progress of the liberal spirit in general that Lord Castlereagh took charge of the repealing measure, so making it a Government Bill. A still greater sign of that same progress is afforded in the fact that the Bill became an Act with practically no opposition at all. Introduced simultaneously in Lords and Commons (Lord Liverpool being its sponsor in the Lower House), a few debates saw it through, the Bill becoming law before July of 1812 had closed.[4] It banished the Five Mile Act and the Conventicle Act from the Statute Book, as well as another Restoration Act which forced Quakers to take the oaths (the Quakers thus completing on the oaths question that emancipation of which we have seen them receiving instalments before[5]): it raised the number of persons who might meet in an unregistered building for worship from five to twenty: the oaths imposed by the Toleration Act were now to be necessary only when a Justice of the Peace demanded them in writing: any Protestant might, however, demand to be sworn and certificated if he chose—this provision putting an end to the practice of certain magistrates who had limited the Toleration Act's range; and disturbers of Nonconformist worship from outside, as well as those disturbers within

[1] For the debate, see *Sketch, etc.*, as previous note, pp. 133-144.
[2] *Evangelical Magazine*, July 1811.
[3] *Supra*, p. 297.
[4] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xxiii. 1105, 1250.
[5] See Index, "Quakers and oaths."

of whom alone the Toleration Act had taken cognisance, were liable to be fined.[1] So many fences were broken down by the new measure, so many windows unclosed to the in-sweeping of freedom's air, that Nonconformists everywhere called it the new Toleration Act. We may add—as further exemplifying how the liberal-religious spirit, with which Nonconformity's new aggression had in this matter allied itself, was making good its ground—that in the following year the Acts against Unitarians, which Fox had in 1792 vainly tried to erase,[2] went the way of the Five Mile and Conventicle Acts, with almost as unceremonious a dismissal ;[3] and that 1813 also saw a small advance in the matter of Catholic relief, English Catholics being in that year put on a level with Irish as to the civil and military offices they might hold.[4] But the outstanding demonstration made by the incidents occurring at this time was the demonstration that Nonconformity could not only defend itself, but could assume the offensive and carry its counter-attack vigorously and successfully through.

Eight years later—in 1820, the year in which the fourth George ascended the throne—another attack, though of a more indirect kind than Lord Sidmouth's, was made upon Nonconformity, to be defeated as Lord Sidmouth's had been and to give rise, as Lord Sidmouth's had given rise, to a successful counter-attack in its turn. It was in connection with the matter of national education—that thorny topic of which so much was to be heard in after-years—that the attack was made. For some time the education question had been in the air, and had unfortunately, though perhaps inevitably, become a battle-ground between the Nonconformists and the Church. Long ago the Act of Uniformity had thrown education into the clergy's hands ; and the subsequent qualifications of that Act, as they had given Nonconformity a more or less restricted liberty to worship, had also given it a more or less restricted liberty to teach. We have had occasion to note more than once how the

[1] Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808-1838*, pp. 49-50 (for the complete Act see *ibid.* pp. 579-586) ; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 576, 577.

[2] *Supra*, p. 294.

[3] Bennett, as former note, pp. 52, 53, erroneously gives the date as 1818.

[4] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760-1860* (3rd ed.), iii. 143.

Nonconformists had taken thought and action in the educational welfare of their youth—for that matter, not of their own youth alone. It was only natural that the clergy of the Establishment should look with disfavour upon Nonconformist educational efforts as tending to alienate children from the Church, and that on the other hand Nonconformists should dread the anti-Nonconformist influence which Church control of education might exert. So far, indeed, had jealousy gone on the Church side at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge—the chief Church of England educational agency at the time—seriously sought to prevent Nonconformists from even buying its books.[1] Then, before the century was many years old, the Bell-Lancaster controversy rang out, to the emphasising of the divergence between Church and Nonconformist educational ideals. Dr. Andrew Bell, a clergyman of the Church of England superintending the Military Orphan Asylum at Madras, hit upon and practised there the "monitorial" system—in brief, the system of setting older boys to instruct the younger—in his school: almost simultaneously, Joseph Lancaster hit upon and practised the same system at home.[2] Lancaster was a Quaker, and taught what has come to be known as "undenominational" religion in his schools; but when Bell returned, and schools under his inspiration multiplied, Church of England doctrine was of course made an essential part of their course. The two sets of schools were making appeal for public support, and rivalry grew keen. The prosperity of Lancaster's schools caused many Churchmen to take alarm; and the forming in 1808 of the "Royal Lancastrian Society"[3]—which six years later became the "British and Foreign School Society"—was followed in 1811 by the institution of the "National Society" for ensuring the swifter multiplication and fuller success of schools of the definitely Church of England type.[4] Mean-

[1] Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, i. 86.

[2] Southey, *Life of Dr. Andrew Bell*, i. 185; Salmon, *Life of Joseph Lancaster*, chap. iii.

[3] Salmon, *Life of Joseph Lancaster*, chaps. 8 and 9. The Royal Free Schools in the Borough Road (where Lancaster had been born) enjoyed the King's patronage.

[4] Southey, *Life of Dr. Andrew Bell*, ii. 337-364.

while, however, it was becoming clear to not a few that the provision of educational facilities for the multitude ought to be the concern of the nation as a whole; and the question as to what their nature was to be had to be faced. Pulpits and tracts enforced the apparently logical argument that because education was a national matter, and because the Church of England was the national Church, therefore education must be under Church of England control; and in 1820 Brougham introduced into the Commons a Bill founded on this idea.[1] This was the attack upon Nonconformity—an attack indirect, indeed, but real—referred to just now. For while a system of rate-supported schools was to be set up, it was provided that the clergyman was in every parish to have the appointment of the schoolmaster, two or three parishioners being associated with him in making the choice, and that the schoolmaster himself must be a member of the Established Church, and must have taken the Sacrament not longer than six months before beginning his work. Attendance at the Parish Church was to be compulsory upon the children; though the children of Nonconformists were to be at liberty to go with their parents if they would. It should be said, also, that no religious book other than the Bible was to be read in the schools, nor was the learning of any distinctive catechism enforced; but, since this provision was in Nonconformist eyes no adequate compensation for the evils which the other clauses imposed, and left the Bill in their view still far too strict, the only effect of the provision upon the controversy was to make some Church people complain that the Bill was not strict enough. The measure was certainly not one which Nonconformists were likely to accept. With the desire strong in their hearts to repeal the Sacramental test where it existed already, they would hardly agree to extend its range; and, besides, the proposed Bill sounded far too much like an echo of the old Schism Bill of Queen Anne. And Brougham's explicit declaration that he believed it right for education to be intimately connected with the Church was in itself a bugle-call at which every Nonconformist instinct would rouse. So,

[1] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., ii. 50 ff.; Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 54, 55.

as in the case of Lord Sidmouth's Bill, strenuous opposition was organised: the shower of petitions once more fluttered down; and by the time the first reading debate was nearing its end, it was seen that the fate of the Bill was sure. Its first reading, accordingly, was all that it received; and thereafter it was heard of no more.[1]

So once again the attack upon Nonconformity had been repulsed; and now once again the counter-attack was made. The attempt at inflicting a new Nonconformist disability was to be followed by an attempt at getting rid of the great disability under which Nonconformists already lay. The Test and Corporation Acts were to be blotted out. Through some years preparations for the grand *coup* went on:[2] the Protestant Society for the Protection of Religious Liberty took measures to influence public opinion by successive meetings at which influential chairmen and speakers pleaded the cause; a special periodical, the *Test Act Reporter*, was started; in 1827 a united Committee, composed of delegates from the Society just named, from the Dissenting Deputies, from the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, and from other similar bodies, was formed; and thus the enterprise gathered volume and force. In the year just named the Corporation of London, playing a *rôle* very different from and far more creditable than the one in which we saw it last,[3] passed a resolution praying for repeal[4]—an incident which may stand as fresh evidence for the spread of the tolerant spirit in the general public mind. Yet further evidence of this was afforded when Lord John Russell undertook charge of the Repeal Bill in the Commons. He had presented petitions for repeal in June of 1827, and had announced his intention of taking action; and in February of the following year he formally moved for leave to bring in the Bill.[5] Peel, leader of the House (the Duke of Wellington, the Premier, was of course

[1] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., ii. 90.

[2] Bennett, as former note, p. 59; Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 457, 458.

[3] *Supra*, pp. 267, 268.

[4] *The World*, Jan. 28, 1828; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., xviii. 359, 360.

[5] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* (3rd ed.), iii. 157-161; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., xviii. 676 ff.

in the Lords), resisted the motion on the Government's behalf, Lord Palmerston taking the same course for kindred though slightly different reasons—Peel minimising the Nonconformist grievance, and Palmerston holding that Roman Catholic Emancipation should first be taken in hand. But, to Peel's surprise, a majority of forty-four appeared in favour of the Bill on a division; and thereupon the Government changed its mind, not perhaps quite uninfluenced by the fact that when the numbers were announced, the crowd outside the House burst into shouts in such wise that "the noise of the general cheering could be heard at Charing Cross."[1] The Bill went through all the more easily in the end because its promoters consented to the insertion of a clause which required from candidates for office a Declaration to the effect that they would do nothing "to injure or subvert the Protestant Church, by law established, or to disturb it in possession of those rights and privileges to which it is by law entitled," certain half-hearted friends being thus made warmer and certain timorous souls made strong.[2] In the Lords, where Lord Holland piloted the Bill, efforts were made from more than one quarter to render this clause more stringent; but the only modification actually effected was the addition to the Declaration of the phrase "on the true faith of a Christian"—a phrase meant to exclude Jews from the benefit of the repeal, though one noble lord said that he would have no difficulty in using it if he were a Jew himself.[3] Lord Eldon was throughout the doughty opponent of the Bill; but the Duke of Wellington proved by his steadfast support that the Government's change of mind was real: the Archbishop of Canterbury (Howley, who had just been enthroned), together with the Bishops of Durham, Lincoln, and Chester, declared that the Tests must go; and without a division the measure went through

[1] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 54.

[2] For the Commons debate, see Bennett, as former note, pp. 62-67; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., xviii. 1137 ff., 1180 ff., 1329-1332, xix. 289 ff.; or *The Test Act Reporter*, a periodical specially issued for the occasion.

[3] The Earl of Winchilsea. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., xix. 161. This Jewish disadvantage was corrected by an Act passed in 1845.

in April, becoming law with the giving of the Royal assent on the 9th of May.[1] So at last the prize at which Nonconformists had looked wistfully and long was won. If we may look on for a moment to the following year, and measure along another line of progress, we may note that the growth of the liberal-religious spirit which had so greatly aided the Nonconformist triumph in 1828 allowed Roman Catholic emancipation to pass in 1829. Since the year at which we left the matter, only one concession had been made to the Catholics—this in an Act of 1817 by which all ranks in the army and navy had been opened to Catholics and, of course, to Nonconformists too.[2] But every other effort on the Catholic behalf had been foiled, the Lords persistently and obstinately throwing out whatever measures of relief the Commons had passed.[3] But in 1829 the Duke of Wellington became convinced that only by concession could civil war be avoided in Ireland; and he was strong enough, now as always, to let the sense of duty over-ride personal preference or dislike. The Catholic Relief Bill he carried through enabled Roman Catholics to sit in Parliament, and to occupy all offices except any in the Ecclesiastical Courts and those of Regent, Lord Chancellor of England, or Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.[4] The passing of Catholic Emancipation shows that the general spirit of liberality was now at such a pitch as to make all the old restraints intolerable to the community's enlightened sense; but otherwise it comes only incidentally into our tale. Now, as before, our chief concern is to note how, with that general spirit of liberality to aid it, Nonconformity was able first of all to repel any assault directed against it, and afterwards to push its own counter-attack home. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 stands as indisputable testimony both to the growth of the "secular" spirit of tolerance and to Nonformity's intrinsic power.

[1] For the Lords debate, see Bennett, as former note, pp. 67-76; Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, N.S., xviii. 1450 ff., xix. 39 ff., 109 ff., 156 ff.; *Test Act Reporter*, as before.

[2] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* (3rd ed.), iii. 143.

[3] See *Cambridge Modern History*, x. chap. 19.

[4] May, as former note, iii. 168-172.

With the repeal of the Acts, *direct* penalties for Nonconformity passed away. Toleration was complete. The laws which punished Nonconformity *as* Nonconformity were torn up and cast away. But the limitation implied in this statement must be noted and borne in mind. For though *direct* penalties upon Nonconformity had disappeared, many *indirect* penalties remained. And it is upon this fact that the thread of the story must for the moment be laid down, and from this fact that it must presently be picked up again.

Section 2

Nonconformity and the Nonconformist Ideal

Authorities.—In seeking for detailed information as to the various denominations we are still helped by a few of the denominational *Histories* which we have previously used, namely, Waddington's *Congregational History*, Dale's *History of English Congregationalism*, Ivimey's *History of the English Baptists* (to 1820), and Taylor's *History of the General Baptists*. For the various branches of Methodism we have the *New History of Methodism*, edited by Townsend, Workman, and Eayrs; and much information as to the various Methodist secessions is contained in a small book entitled *Modern Developments in Methodism* (*Eras of Nonconformity* series), by William Redfern. Of more general religious *Histories*, dealing with more than one denomination, Stoughton's two works, *History of Religion in England* and *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, are still available, as also Bogue and Bennett's *History of Dissenters*, and Bennett's *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*. Of the particularist bodies much may be learned from the second of Stoughton's works, though for the Plymouth Brethren Neatby's *History of the Plymouth Brethren* makes all other references practically superfluous. The Quakers present the greatest difficulty, as there is no adequate history of Quakerism's more recent stages, though the lack will probably be soon supplied as an admirable series now in process of appearance develops. Modern Quaker history has at present to be sought in many books, some of which are indicated in the footnotes.

We pass from the exterior to the interior aspects of Nonconformist life. We have seen that from 1787 to 1828 Nonconformity had carried the process of recovering the elements of its original conception so far as to press eagerly the toleration idea, this having followed upon an earlier recovery of religious earnestness and zeal. But was the *ultimate* Nonconformist conception calling it? Had the central element of the original conception—that element which is so important as almost to constitute the conception—successfully beckoned Nonconformity to renewed understanding and allegiance? That all matters of external

structure should emerge as it were automatically from inward spiritualities—that organisation can only act to the profit of life as it is itself the product of an antecedent life and reacts upon the life which has produced it—that according to the Nonconformist view of the Church it is in the idea and in the inner experience of life one is immersed, the idea being formative in the theory of the Church, and the experience formative in the Church's actual making—that one does not begin with organisation, but comes to it, comes to it inevitably indeed, but as to a thing second both in importance and in time—that life, in short, must *make* organisation, not organisation life—was Nonconformity regaining upon this idea the grasp which, as we have seen, had grown so slack? To put it the other way we previously adopted—we have now seen Nonconformity taking *two* steps backward, upward, and home, the first from the level of religious decay to the platform of religious earnestness and life, the second (Nonconformity taking with it what it had gained from the first) from the platform of religious earnestness and life to that of quickened keenness for religious freedom. But had it acquired any sense of how long the stairway was and of where the topmost platform lay? It is the answer to that question we have now to give.

In brief, the answer will be that Nonconformity, in this supremely important respect, went no further than its renewed pushing of the liberty or toleration idea implied, and that apart from this it merely held fast to what it had, but made no gain. Nonconformity, save that it grew more daring in its fight against injustice, was on the whole (the Quakers are the one exception we shall have to notice) what it had been during the previous period we marked off. Those to whom a new religious stirring had come felt that stirring still, and showed its fruits. Those to whom a new stirring of the passion for religious liberty had come felt *that* stirring still, and showed its fruits. But having said that—and having been glad to say it—one can say no more. The ultimate Nonconformist essential did not call. On the whole things in this respect remained much as they had been. What this means, positively and

negatively, for the various denominations a short survey will enable us to see.

For the Presbyterians—now to all intents and purposes the Unitarians—it means that they maintained the somewhat coldly intellectual religion which has before been spoken of as their distinguishing sign.[1] As said just now, the perpetuation of the *status quo* necessarily meant that those who had felt the new religious impulse of the Revival felt it still. But this impulse the Presbyterians had not felt. Accordingly they did not feel it now. In numbers they were declining—as would be expected with a denomination which, basing itself upon a doctrine so largely negative, and practising a method so largely argumentative and critical, could make so feeble a popular appeal. They had in their ranks many men who were intellectually able, and some for whom that epithet is far too weak. Belsham, Lindsey, Aspland, and Toulmin[2] are names which confer lustre on any denomination's story; and while all these men were of highest character, Lindsey showed, as another Unitarian, Martineau, was to show after him, that if Unitarianism is scarcely likely to produce saintliness by its own positive force, saints can at any rate find shelter beneath its wing. But the denomination as a whole did not move from the position in which we saw it last. Sporadic efforts were made by some to give it warmth and colour, as when Mrs. Barbauld emphasised the need in religion of emotion as well as of thought. "We are too scrupulous in our public exercises," she wrote. "A prayer strictly philosophical must ever be a cold and dry composition. . . . Another species of ridicule to be avoided is that kind of sneer often thrown upon those whose hearts are giving way to honest emotion."[3] A somewhat similar feeling —although something like a charge of disingenuousness as well as of lukewarmness, is implied in Belsham's words —appeared when Belsham himself called upon his fellow-Unitarians to show more enthusiasm in their professed cause,

[1] *Supra*, pp. 256, 257.

[2] Toulmin was the editor of the standard edition of Neal's *History of the Puritans*, so frequently referred to in these pages.

[3] *Works of A. L. Barbauld* (ed. Lucy Aikin), ii. 239, 242.

and reproached them because by not doing so they were playing the "Methodists' and Calvinists' game."[1] But the ice was too thick to yield to rays like these. The Unitarians of the period present—as it is not unfair to say that they have presented through the succeeding years —the appearance of a denomination cramped by its own forms of thought, permeated by the atmosphere of a lecture-room rather than by that of a Church, and consequently offering a curriculum for the mind instead of a redemption for the soul. They had to pay the penalty in loss of influence upon the majority of those without, in the spiritual bloodlessness of many within. They went haltingly. At the time of which we are writing, it was clear that even the predominantly intellectual ministry of Unitarian Presbyterianism—doubtless, though the Presbyterians themselves would not have confessed it, just because it was this and little more—was not going to be easily maintained. The very Academies in which it trained its pastors seemed fated to know but a brief span of life, though every failure was followed by a courageously-made new attempt.[2] Presbyterian Unitarianism maintained itself, but did no more, and maintained itself as the cold and careful apologist of Unitarian views rather than as the ardent herald of a gospel whereby the world was to be saved.

Before quitting the Presbyterians, it is necessary to note by way of parenthesis that between them and their old Congregational comrades relations were becoming gradually strained. The reason lay in the fact that buildings and charitable trusts (Lady Hewley's charity more particularly [3]), originally founded for the propagation of the evangelical doctrines at one time held in common by Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and for the benefit of ministers who preached them, had by this time become largely alienated to Presbyterian—which meant to Unitarian —use. Presbyterianism's lapse into Unitarianism had been a gradual thing, with slowly-accumulating results: evangelical trustees had been little by little supplanted by

[1] Williams, *Memoirs of Rev. Thomas Belsham*, pp. 427, 428, 526.

[2] See R. B. Aspland's *Memoir of Rev. Robert Aspland*, pp. 303 ff.; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 220.

[3] *Supra*, p. 160.

those of heterodox ideas; and yet the matter had hardly been noticed until the completed change appeared as a *fait accompli* before the eyes of the world. It was natural that Congregationalists should feel aggrieved, at any rate in being shut out from the benefits of a charity like Lady Hewley's, which had certainly in its original institution had them in view. And it was natural that they should seek to have their grievance set right. But the circumstances out of which Congregational action ultimately arose were unfortunately such as to give to the action the look of revenge. An incident connected with a Church at Wolverhampton—which had lapsed into Unitarianism at the close of the eighteenth century but whose minister had returned to orthodoxy in 1816—had started a dispute destined to remain open for many years,[1] and destined also to have important consequences which we shall chronicle in their place.[2] The trustees sought to eject the minister: the minister's friends retaliated by endeavouring to take the building by force; and in the end the case passed into the Chancery Court. Leaving it there for the present, we have to note that the incident was one of the first causes of friction and bad feeling between the two denominations once so closely linked. Then in 1824 came a further rub upon the place already sore, when a Unitarian speaker at Manchester went out of his way to declare that orthodoxy was "gloom and darkness and desolation," while Unitarianism was "light and liberty and joy"[3]—a very provocatory, but very foolish, statement which attracted much more attention than it deserved. The Congregationalists retorted by charging the Presbyterians with dishonesty in keeping buildings and money to which they were not entitled; and Dr. James Bennett commenced (about 1826) enquiries[4] which led in the end to complaints to the Charity Commissioners and to the institution of a suit for the recovery of control over Lady Hewley's Trust. That the

[1] James, *History of Litigation and Legislation respecting Presbyterian Chapels and Charities*, pp. 211-213. [2] *Infra*, pp. 388, 389.

[3] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. 310, 311.

[4] Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 293 ff. Dr. Bennett was joint author with Dr. Bogue of the *History of Dissenters*, and continued it in the volume just named.

Congregationalists had legal right in the matter was proved by the final issue of the suit: that they had a moral right of interference, probably few will deny; but one is bound to wish that they had acted under other circumstances, and when there were no quarrels just at the boiling-point to make their intervention appear like a mere desire to hurt. The end of the litigation—both as to the Wolverhampton Church and as to Lady Hewley's Trust—lies, however, beyond our period's bound. The incidents which prepared the way for it are here noted as sad tokens of growing alienation between two denominations which once bore together the burden and heat of the day.

For the Nonconformist Churches other than Presbyterian, the maintenance of the existing position meant that because they had yielded to the new religious impulse of the Evangelical Revival, they felt it still. That is, individual piety remained warm: the inculcation and cultivation of it was made the chief business of the pulpit: membership in the Church was held to be a public profession and confession of having undergone a spiritual change; and all that could on the most liberal rendering be included under the generic title of "good works" was remembered and practised. It was an era of great evangelical preachers.[1] The Congregationalists had Clayton and Collyer in London, John Angell James at Birmingham, William Jay at Bath, Dr. Bogue at Gosport, and able representatives both in towns and in villages all over the land. The Calvinistic Baptists possessed the two Rylands, father and son, Andrew Fuller, Joseph Kinghorn, John Foster, and Robert Hall, the last one of the greatest pulpit geniuses England has ever known. All these men proclaimed a vital religion into whose substance "conversion," "faith," "salvation"—all the resounding watchwords of evangelicalism—were deeply inlaid, though they proclaimed it with the disciplined and mentally-informed fervour which was consonant to the tradition of the pulpits they held. To securing a succession of ministers properly equipped the

[1] For sketches of various leading preachers at this time, consult Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. chaps. 14 and 15; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. chaps. 9 and 10; Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 428-437. The names here given make no pretence of exhausting the list.

Congregationalists and Calvinistic Baptists—more especially the former—continued to give the earnest attention they had been showing for many years.[1] The General Baptists, if they were numerically feeble, and if they had no names that could rank with those just set down, held fast to the faith for whose sake they had been called into being: they had their special difficulties, perhaps arising out of the somewhat heterogeneous character of the elements which had constituted them from the first, but patiently and successfully thrust the difficulties down;[2] and Daniel Taylor, the man whose influence had done so much for the making of the denomination, presided for many years over an institution in London at which ministers were trained, and which furnished a succession of men earnest and painstaking, if not specially distinguished for brilliant pulpit power.[3] The Methodists—whom we, of course, rank with the Nonconformists, since facts so demand, though many of them were still refusing to wear the Nonconformist badge—were faithful to the spirit and traditions of their origin. Notwithstanding the controversies and separations which commenced very soon after Wesley's death,[4] there was no swerving on the part of any of the Methodist bodies from the old line of service on behalf of a Gospel passionately preached to a lost world passionately pitied and passionately loved. "Revivalism," say recent historians, "was the note of the Methodism of the middle age, especially of the earlier part. Neither preachers nor people were content with steady, slow progress. They were grateful for this, but they looked for, and obtained, times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."[5] These few sentences serve to show that Wesley's successors were essentially Wesley's own men, and conjure up the vision of Methodism wielding the old weapons and finding that their edge was still unblunted, relying upon the old footholds and finding that they supported safely still,

[1] See Stoughton, *History of Religion in England* (ed. 1881), vi. 322, 404; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 239-242; Waddington, *Congregational History*, iii. 675, 676, iv. 29-32, 119, 254.

[2] See many particulars, covering many congregations, in Taylor, *History of the General Baptists*, ii. 219-454.

[3] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 540.

[4] *Infra*, pp. 325 ff.

[5] J. R. and A. E. Gregory, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 413.

believing in the old spiritual powers and finding that they did not put those who trusted in them to any shame. Indeed, direct testimony is available as to how in respect of religious fruitfulness Yorkshire was found to be a "land of Goshen," and as to how from that northern county down to Cornwall in the south the old fires kindled still when the old torches were applied.[1] And although the references here made are to the work of Wesleyan Methodism in particular, Methodism of other shades—Calvinistic and the rest—showed the same general characteristics and held as tenaciously to its old ideals.[2] If, before passing on, we may allude to the less important matter of Nonconformist numbers and social status, we may mention that the increase in numbers which marked the latter part of the eighteenth century[3] was accelerated after the century had turned — as might be expected with the Evangelical Revival continuing to bring in so many recruits. A calculation made in 1808 returns the entire number of Nonconformist congregations of the three older orders—Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregational—at two thousand and two, out of which total two hundred and seventy belonged to the first, seven hundred and eight to the second, and one thousand and twenty-four to the third.[4] The total of two thousand and two shows a considerable advance on that of 1760; but by 1827 there had been yet further growth, the estimated number of congregations in the three denominations having risen to two thousand one hundred and fifty-seven—the increase signifying more than immediately appears, inasmuch as Wales, included in the two previous returns, is not reckoned in this.[5] Also it must be remembered that the Presbyterians were all the while dropping down the scale, so that the rate of increase of the other two bodies must have been great indeed for the given total to be reached. As to Methodism, it is calculated

[1] See Stevens, *History of Methodism*, ii. 371-374, 405, 406, 409, 462, 463, etc.

[2] See Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. chap. 11.

[3] *Supra*, p. 245.

[4] Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 543, 544. From the Baptist numbers twenty have to be deducted as being "Sandemanian Baptist" congregations (see *infra*, p. 336) which have no real connection with the Baptists at all. Of the remainder, about a hundred are "General Baptist Churches."

[5] Bennett, *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 264, 265.

to have had seventy-two thousand members and nearly half a million adherents as early as Wesley's death,[1] and it had been spreading ever since. The arithmetical test works out satisfactorily enough. As to Nonconformity's social position, the period with which we are dealing was the period which made it finally clear that the few aristocratic adherents whom Nonconformity had ever possessed would scarcely find successors, and that it was chiefly from among the poor on the one hand, and from the rising middle class on the other, that the Nonconformist ranks would in future be kept filled.[2] Perhaps it had been becoming more difficult, rather than easier, for men and women of exalted social rank—even assuming Nonconformist leanings on their part—to identify themselves with Nonconformity as by degrees oppression had died down. When the price exacted for faithfulness to Nonconformist principle was high, the man of rank who paid it at least stood as a sufferer for conscience before his world, and might be commended for chivalry, if for nothing else. When there was less to pay, his equals would be less ready, since such glamour as this was gone, to hold him excused; and he in his turn might find it a harder task to stand his ground. Considerations of honour—such as would appeal both to him and to many of his closest associates—might press less imperiously than before. Moreover, with the more *obvious* signs of faithfulness to conscience on Nonconformity's part disappearing, Nonconformity itself might be more quickly suspected of being mere disaffection to the established order in Church and State; and so its chance of winning adherents from the higher ranks of society might be still further reduced. But whatever the reason might have been, the fact is so. The poor and the middle classes were henceforth to be Nonconformity's back-bone. But, returning from questions of number and social status to more important things, let us repeat that in religious fervour, in evangelistic zeal, in all the things that go to make up a vital Christianity, which is something more than a merely formal acceptance of the Christian faith, Nonconformity held fast to what the Evangelical Revival had bestowed. So far,

[1] W. J. Townsend, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 369.
[2] Bennett, as former note, pp. 273, 274.

at any rate, the Nonconformist spirit had nothing whereof to complain.

In respect of the "good works" just now alluded to the Nonconformists added many entries to the list. The closing years of the eighteenth century and the opening years of the nineteenth marked the birth of a new and compelling sense of duty in the Christian people of England to the nations which sat in darkness abroad. In British colonies and dependencies the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had been at work for nearly a century past; but not till now did the missionary flame leap from beacon to beacon, gathering vividness as it passed along. It was not among the Nonconformists alone that the new impulse was born; and though Nonconformist activities are our chief study here, it should be mentioned that the "Society for Missions to Africa and the East" was formed in 1799, to become the "Church Missionary Society" in 1812;[1] while it is of interest to note that the new association, according to one of the original clauses of its constitution, determined to maintain "friendly intercourse" with "other Protestant societies engaged in the same benevolent design of propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ."[2] The "other Protestant Societies" had already come upon the field. One would expect the Methodists—remembering Wesley's famous dictum that his parish knew no bounds save that of the world itself—to be foremost in missionary enterprise; and, as a matter of fact, Coke had been pushing the missionary idea upon them ever since 1786, elaborating far-reaching plans, and making the Methodist missions his special personal charge. When the Wesleyan Missionary Society came to be founded in 1817, it found that, in consequence of Coke's labours, it had not so much to create missionary ardour or to begin missionary work as to direct ardour already burning and to organise and consolidate work already going on.[3] Carey so stirred the Baptist heart (it is to the Calvinistic Baptists reference is first made, though in point of fact the electric current which started from Carey carried far beyond the denomination to which Carey himself

[1] Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, i. 71. [2] *Ibid.*
[3] See article on "The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society" in the *Encyclopaedia of Missions* (2nd ed.), pp. 776-781.

belonged) by his famous trumpet-call to his fellow-Baptists to "expect great things *from* God" and to "attempt great things *for* God"[1] that the Baptist Missionary Society had been founded in 1792, and Carey himself had gone forth on his wonderful Indian labours, the first of a long heroic line. In September of 1795 the London Missionary Society—largely, though not exclusively, Congregational in its original sources, and the Society which has always been in a special sense Congregationalism's own—was founded, Dr. David Bogue being perhaps the strongest moving spirit in its creation, though he was nobly seconded and supported by many more, in whose ranks a number of Episcopalians appeared.[2] Before our period closed, men like Morrison in China, and John Williams in the South Seas, were already writing the earliest noble pages of the Society's noble history which runs to so many volumes now. In 1816 the General Baptists followed in their Calvinistic brethren's track, with a Society formed on a smaller scale, as their smaller numbers compelled, but with a courage which did not shrink from sending missionaries even to Orissa, the city where the great god Juggernaut ruled supreme.[3] Missionary work in India—this is a suitable point at which to note—was rendered easier by the insertion in the East India Company's new charter (1813) of a clause providing that access and protection must not be denied to any who wished to work for India's spiritual good.[4] For the West Indies similar rules had been laid down at an earlier date.[5] The Moravians still heard the missionary call as they had heard it from the first, choosing such fields as the West Indies, Greenland, and Labrador, for the sowing of their seed, and undertaking a task from which the natural man must have shrunk with something like disgust by the establishment of an African Leper mission in 1823.[6] Nonconformity's missionary record

[1] Smith, *Life of Carey* (Everyman's Library), pp. 36-38; article on the "Baptist Missionary Society" in the *Encyclopaedia of Missions* (2nd ed.), pp. 67-69.

[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. 58-65; article on "London Missionary Society" in *Encyclopaedia of Missions* (2nd ed.), pp. 402-411.

[3] Taylor, *History of General Baptists*, ii. 467, 468.

[4] Stock, *History of the Church Missionary Society*, i. 100-104; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 25-27.

[5] Stoughton, as previous note, i. 24, 25.

[6] A. S. Thompson, *Moravian Missions*, pp. 387, 388.

in these years deserves to be written in letters of gold. But the era was equally prolific in religious activities directed upon the needs of home; and Nonconformists may without breach of modesty—certainly without breach of truth—take credit for having initiated some of the most important of these, though the co-operation of Churchmen was warmly welcomed, and in many cases warmly given. The Religious Tract Society owed its origin in 1799 to the suggestion of George Burder, a Congregational minister of Coventry, who had himself been circulating religious tracts in large numbers in his own district, and who desired to see the work so extended as to cover the entire land. Clergymen and laymen of the Establishment joined the Committee as it was formed, and the Society received the undenominational character it has ever since retained.[1] From the Religious Tract Society the British and Foreign Bible Society emerged by a happy thought of Joseph Hughes, the Tract Society's secretary—who, on hearing of the child that had walked thirty miles over Welsh roads to buy a copy of the Bible, only to find that she had endured in vain, and on being urged to form a Bible Society for Wales, said, under a sudden flash of inspiration, "Why not for the British Empire and for the world?" For the British Empire and for the world, accordingly, the well-known Society was founded in 1804 at a meeting held in the London Tavern, Bishopsgate, with Granville Sharp, the Church of England Evangelical, in the chair, and with the various Nonconformist denominations, including the Quakers, represented round the Board.[2] Influential support from all sections of the religious public was speedily rendered; and the Bible Society, like the Religious Tract Society, has henceforth belonged, not to one Church, but to all. The Sunday School Union—started in 1803 under the initiative of William Brodie Gurney—became a larger thing in 1812, having, like the associations already mentioned, both Nonconformist and Established ministers on its committee;[3] though this particular society has become almost exclusively Nonconformist in later times.

[1] Jones, *Jubilee Memorial of the Religious Tract Society*, p. 21.
[2] Canton, *The Story of the Bible Society*, p. 13.
[3] Watson, *History of the Sunday School Union*, pp. 12, 21, 25.

In all these departments of work, the vital character of Nonconformist religious principle proved itself. In the line of philanthropy, as distinct from that of religion strictly taken, John Howard,[1] prison reformer of indefatigable energy and dauntless perseverance, with his large heart and capable brain, was carrying to fruition the work we previously saw him begin—his name standing out as that of one who was doing in the limelight what many more were doing in the byways and in corners and on smaller scale. Nonconformists generally—though in this matter the Quakers wear the brightest crown—supported the crusade of Clarkson and Wilberforce for the abolition of the slave trade, the crusade which planted its flag on the enemy's citadel in 1807.[2] They were feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, leading the blind, proving their faith by their works, minding the things of others as well as saving their own souls; and they still remembered the lesson which, among other lessons, the Evangelical Revival had taught them—the lesson that they had, under their Lord, a world to redeem.

This, then, is what is meant, *positively*, by the statement that through this period Nonconformity, in its relation to the ultimate Nonconformist spirit and ideal, did nothing more (over and above what its renewed pushing of the liberty or toleration idea implied) than maintain the *status quo*. The revival of religion, which had marked the beginning of Nonconformity's return towards that ideal, perpetuated its effects, or rather perpetuated itself. But *negatively*, the statement means that the ultimate Nonconformist ideal did not come in its fulness into the Nonconformist view. The Nonconformist spirit by no means came to its own. It was only a partial understanding of it that its representatives possessed, only a partial service of it they gave.

In a manner, this is not difficult to explain. The old and traditional Nonconformist bodies—for the moment, we have specially in view the Congregationalists and Baptists who were the representatives of the earliest Independent strain—were, it must be remembered, retracing their steps

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography*.

[2] Clarkson, *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (ed. 1839), pp. 611, 612. Slave emancipation was, of course, another matter. This did not come till 1833.

along a road which had gradually, as they descended it, led them away from their true and original standing-ground, yet doing so without full consciousness of their fault in ever having descended the road at all. In fact, if it may be so put, they were being drawn backward by the Nonconformist spirit which sought to recall them home, but were still keeping their faces turned away from the direction whence the backward pull was coming. Under these conditions, there could be nothing more than slow and wavering movement, with many pauses, many erratic swerves, and with never a rush made eagerly and earnestly toward the formerly forsaken and now almost forgotten home. Nor would any backward step, though itself truly made, automatically suggest the next. To put it another way, there was nothing in what these Churches were now doing, important as it was, to recall the ultimate Nonconformist ideal to their minds. Both religious activity and the struggle for perfect liberty were justifiable on quite other grounds than those given in the Nonconformist ideal—the first because true and vital religion is of course the aim for which all Churches, Conformist and Nonconformist alike, exist, the second because abstract considerations of justice pleaded liberty's cause. It was quite possible, therefore, to be religiously fervent and to contend for an enlargement of liberty's bounds without hearing the ideal Nonconformist call. That might be drowned beneath other voices which properly and sincerely made *this* part of ideal Nonconformity's call their own. This is what was happening in the case of the older Nonconformist bodies at the time which is being reviewed. They were sufficiently roused to deal with immediate and patent ills. But with ultimates they did not deal. Their sense that they must repossess themselves of something which had been lost, and obtain something which they had never held, did not reach far enough to cover the whole loss and lack. They were still bent upon the complete recovery or safe keeping of the religious earnestness whose forfeiture had crippled them so: they were bent also upon the acquisition of the perfect liberty they had not yet possessed; but in neither case did they relate the thing to the larger process of acquiring or re-acquiring the concrete

applications and embodiments of the full Nonconformist ideal. That such a process was necessary—that for the full accomplishment of their mission in the world they must look upon these matters which were engrossing them, not as ends in themselves, but as elements, of a larger whole—these were things they did not know.

The evidence is largely negative, as in the nature of the case it is bound to be. One comes upon no sign that the Nonconformists of the time had caught even a far-off glimpse of the great Church-ideal by which for a little while—if only for a little while—their long-dead forefathers had been inspired. The Nonconformist historian who wrote soon after this period's close—Dr. Bennett—congratulates himself, as he surveys it, upon the many evidences of doctrinal steadfastness, of deep piety, of learning applied to religious and theological concerns, of liberality, shown by the Nonconformists of his own generation; but there is nothing to show that either he or those of whom he writes had any suspicion concerning Nonconformist ignorance of or faithlessness to the true Nonconformist ideal.[1] In fact, in that respect he appears to be complacently content with things as they are: there is no note of repentance or wistful longing in reference to such things as these; and so once more it is proved that the good may be, as in this instance it was, the enemy of the best. Yet one can find positive evidence too. The alteration made in reference to the "Regium Donum" in 1804 was one in which no Nonconformist who understood the implications of Nonconformity could have acquiesced; yet it was not until some time after this period—and not until a good many Nonconformist voices had spoken on the mistaken side, that the Nonconformist protest grew as strong as it ought to have been from the first. The matter is as a rule cursorily referred to by Nonconformist historians, and only a sort of hesitating verdict pronounced; but truth compels a declaration that in this thing Nonconformist judgment went for the most part far astray. The origin of the "Regium Donum" has been dealt with previously;[2] and we saw that while Noncon-

[1] See the section on "The Internal or Religious State of Dissenters" in Bennett's *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 300 ff. [2] *Supra*, pp. 186 ff.

formist acceptance of the King's gifts was undoubtedly unwise, shackling Nonconformist independence and in some cases putting a seal upon Nonconformity's lips, no actual infringement of Nonconformist principle was involved. But after 1804 this could no longer be said. In that year the "Regium Donum" became a parliamentary grant. Certain of the Royal demesnes—whose rentals had formerly gone to the Sovereign's private purse—were transferred to the public, and in place of their revenues a definite annual sum was paid to the Crown. When it was found that the royal expenditure passed beyond the amount allowed, further sums were allotted, and moreover some of the annual expenditure of the King's private purse was thrown upon the public funds. With this transferred expenditure went certain charities, the "Regium Donum" being one.[1] Thus the gift to the Nonconformists was henceforth to come from the country as a whole. And now the thing was much more inconsistent with Nonconformist principle than it had been before. To touch the money was now, from the true Nonconformist standpoint, something worse than unwise. The Presbyterians or Unitarians, having no objection on principle to religion's support by the State, were, of course, in no more equivocal position than that which they had occupied before. But of the other Nonconformist bodies this could not be said. Some Nonconformists, indeed, so understood the matter and so spoke; and protests, however feebly begun, made themselves heard in growing numbers and volume till at a later date they achieved their end. Indeed, it may as well be said here that it was in deference to Nonconformist protests that the grant was at length withdrawn.[2] It was surrendered, not taken away. But at first such protests as were made went unheeded; and Nonconformists exposed themselves to the taunt, frequently enough flung at them by their enemies, that they did not serve God for nought. Beyond doubt anti-Nonconformist speakers and writers made far too much of the matter, rolling it as a sweet morsel upon their tongues; but equally beyond doubt, Nonconformist partisans and historians have often failed to

[1] Rees, *A Sketch of the History of the Regium Donum*, pp. 76-78. But Rees writes in defence of the grant.

[2] *Infra*, p. 415.

make enough; and certainly the incident stands as one piece of evidence that the Nonconformists of the day did not realise what their own fundamental principles involved. They were not back upon, were not even beholding with longing eyes, the old ideal ground. Another piece of evidence, not so obviously pointing to the same conclusion, and yet undoubtedly doing so when truly sounded, is found in the abortive attempt to found a "Congregational Union" made in 1808.[1] County Associations of Congregational Churches were already in existence and had proved their worth; and it was supposed that federation on a wider scale might lead to proportionately better results. The idea was sound; but the comparatively narrow foundation on which the Union was based, followed by its failure and its death, showed that the greatness of the opportunity had not been rightly gauged. It was as an association for religious work in imperfectly evangelised districts, and nothing more, that the new Union was formed. An excellent object, of course; but that Congregationalists—forming the oldest Nonconformist body in the country, and the body by whose ancestors the Nonconformist theory had in the beginning been truly held—should, in the hour of drawing its various parts into corporate unity, fail to make any fresh formulation of their own ultimate ground or to realise that any such fresh formulation was required, indicates how far forgetfulness had gone and how profound was their sleep. The hour of close fellowship should surely have been the hour in which the ideal underlying bond of fellowship stood clear to the mind's eye. As it was, the Union proved itself to possess but an anaemic frame; and the course it ran was short. It was not under the blow of opposition that it fell—though a barrister, Mr. Sedgwick, in what Waddington rightly terms a tirade of "frantic nonsense," had sought to make out that the formation of the Union masked a wide-spread conspiracy, in violation of the spirit of the British Constitution, for the extermination of the Established Church.[2] It died when it was found in 1827

[1] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. 218, 219; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 686-688.

[2] Waddington, as former note. The description of Sedgwick's pamphlet as "frantic nonsense" occurs in the table of Contents prefixed to the volume.

that it had no special *raison d'être* of its own, and was only doing in very feeble fashion what a later-formed Society, the "Home Missionary Society," was doing in more effectual ways. Into the Home Missionary Society, accordingly, the Union was merged—a process which must have been fairly easy, since "the only business the Congregational Union of that date had in hand was that of trying to nurse into existence the cause at Mile End, New Town, with the intention of dropping it out altogether if it should prove too burdensome."[1] The entire episode throws strong light upon the "denominational consciousness" of Congregationalists at the time, and upon the inadequate degree in which they were gripped by their own true fundamental ideal. The Baptists a few years later—in 1812—formed something in the nature of a Union in their turn, as the Congregationalists had done; but the scheme did not go much further than arranging for an annual consultative gathering at which matters pertaining to the spread of Baptist interests should be discussed, and at which the success of Baptist foreign missions should be promoted so far as might be.[2] The Baptists were as far as their Congregational brethren from any apprehension of that large principle and ideal which ought to have bound all their Churches into one whole: the beginning of a real "Union" was in both cases pushed off to a remoter date; and neither denomination, it must be said again, was back upon, or even beholding with longing eyes, the old ideal ground.

On other parts of the field the Nonconformist spirit was struggling for recognition in quarters which it had an undoubted right to claim as its own, but in which no formal assent to its title had been given. A glance at this struggle must be taken as part of the process of estimating the fortune of the Nonconformist spirit and ideal at the period under review. And this means that something must now be said of the Methodist divisions which set in immediately after Wesley's death. We have noted how Methodism, or the newer Puritanism, essentially represented a new effort on the part of the Nonconformist spirit to come to its own, as

[1] Waddington, as former note, iv. 323.
[2] Ivimey, *History of English Baptists*, iv. 122 ff.

the older Puritanism had done; how, nevertheless, it was not recognised for what it was, and how, in the Wesleyan branch of it (the branch at which we have just now to look, since the fortunes of the Whitefield or Calvinistic branch have been dealt with elsewhere) it was, as to the organisation which Wesley gave it, the outcome of the Nonconformist spirit working within and through a predominantly Conformist mind. We have seen how Wesley laid down rules covering the whole ground—how reluctantly he yielded to any idea of separation from the Established Church—how, in matters of ordination and the Sacrament, he contented himself with meeting the moment's emergency, not projecting into the future any guiding lines along which his followers might walk—how, in his overmastering desire adequately to equip Methodism with all it needed for its religious purposes, and at the same time not to give it the character of a separated and Nonconformist Church, he so completely preserved his own authority as to leave his Societies bewildered when his hand was removed and his voice was heard no more.[1] It comes to this, that the Nonconformist spirit, the true parent of Wesleyan Methodism, was kept in check during Wesley's lifetime in the very body to which it had given birth. The Conformist element in Wesley's nature, though always spiritualised by the intensity of his evangelistic passion, had things too much its own way. And the inevitable issue—just because it was, notwithstanding this, really the Nonconformist spirit by which the entire movement was inspired—was that when Wesley was gone the Nonconformist spirit began to press its claims once more.

Only—and herein lies the importance for our chief study of the events which supervened—the true significance of that pressure was again misunderstood by those subject to it, and the call of the Nonconformist spirit in the heart of Wesleyan Methodism—which was really, in the true understanding of it, a call to remove the emphasis of things from organisation altogether, and to let organisation result from life instead of being regulated from a platform of its own, isolated as though there were a standard whereby *in itself*

[1] See *supra*, pp. 226-232.

it might be judged and as though adjustments *within* it, irrespective of their reference to anything *outside* it, could be of supreme importance—was translated into a call to press the idea, already so sadly in possession in other Nonconformist spheres, of "democracy applied to Church affairs." Of course, it was natural enough, since any change which was going to be made must have its first *outward* manifestation in the diminution of authority like Wesley's when Wesley's successors tried to exercise it, that such diminution of authority should be taken by short-sighted mortals as summing up the *entire* required change. It was natural enough, also, with the older Nonconformist Churches built apparently upon the "democracy applied to Church affairs" idea, that many members of the new Nonconformist Church, in seeking to find ground more permanent and sure than that which they occupied, should work that same idea into their foundations so far as the special Methodist conditions allowed. (On the other hand, as we must note again presently, the very fact that they did so could only serve to give the idea yet greater prominence for those denominations which already gave it too much.) Certainly, it was round this idea, or round some particular application of it—the idea of "democracy applied to Church affairs" so far as the special Methodist conditions allowed—that Wesleyan Methodist disputes were fought, and for the sake of this idea that secessions from Wesleyan Methodism took place.

The story of the early Wesleyan Methodist secessions can here be only briefly told.[1] It should be premised that after Wesley's death, the supreme guiding and controlling power over the Wesleyan Societies passed into the hands of the "Legal Hundred"—that is, an assembly of one hundred preachers named by Wesley himself in a "Deed of Declaration" drawn up in 1784. The authority which Wesley had exercised personally was to be put into commission: the Conference wielding it was to meet annually: while it was suggested that preachers not actually included in the "Hundred" should be called into counsel, they were to be

[1] It has not been thought necessary to give many detailed references for these events. Readers are referred to the list of authorities given at the beginning of the section.

called for counsel alone; and the laity were not to find a place upon the Conference benches at all. These were the salient points. "The authority of the Hundred was to be equal to Wesley's own, and was to be wielded with the same kindliness and supreme regard for the work of God as he had manifested."[1] The arrangement was so far modified in practice—owing to a letter which Wesley was found to have written—as to give preachers not belonging to the "Hundred" equal status with those who did. It was after all not only for counsel, but for joint authority, that they were called in. But it was hardly to be expected that the mass of Methodist members would remain permanently content under a "benevolent tyranny" such as this. For in point of fact, the whole thing was really inconsistent—just as Wesley's own autocracy had been inconsistent, however the wonderful elements in Wesley's character had disguised the inconsistency for the time being and prevented its harmful consequences from being felt—with the vitality and passion which characterised Methodist religion, and really imposed upon Methodists a Conformist yoke beneath which Methodist religion could not help but lose, at least partially, those best qualities by whose possession its existence was justified. So soon as Wesley was gone, the inconsistency was instinctively felt; and the series of revolts against the intrusion of the Conformist idea began. The scheme, taking no account of the currents of religious life, thought, and feeling in the multitude of Methodist members—not deriving itself *from* these currents nor referring itself *to* them, but simply imposing itself *upon* them—not even giving them the opportunity of making a voluntary surrender of their rights, but assuming that they possessed none—was not one which the Nonconformist spirit at the back of Methodist religion could approve. The revolts, however imperfectly they may have understood themselves, were revolts in religion's interests—revolts of religion against the very evils which had gone so far to slay it before Methodism arose—even though they did not base themselves upon that broad platform, but sometimes only upon a general demand that the laity as well as

[1] J. R. and A. E. Gregory in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 382. The "Deed of Declaration" is in *ibid.* ii. 551-556 (Appendix B).

the preachers should be represented in the Conference ranks or in governing bodies of lower grades, or sometimes upon special points whereon autocratic authority of higher or lower grade was held to have ruled wrong.

It was the general demand, made and refused, that led to the first secession from the original body and to the establishment of the "Methodist New Connexion" in 1797. Against the popular appeal in favour of giving the Church members a vote in Church government, the Methodist preachers for the most part turned a deaf ear—and this although they were quick enough to take precautions against being themselves thrust out into the cold. So far as this latter point is concerned, movements in the interests of greater liberty had been commenced among the Methodist preachers immediately after Wesley's death, at least movements designed to prevent authority from becoming immovably fixed in a few hands or in the hands of one. It was feared that the President of the Conference might come to wield too great a power; and in order to obviate this, it was decided in the Conference of 1791 that the President should hold office only for one year, while at the succeeding Conference it was further settled that no President, having served once, could serve again until eight years had passed. Also, the 1791 Conference elected as its President William Thompson, a man who had been well to the front in devising ways of stretching the bonds by which the preachers feared they were going to be bound. Their own interest in liberty the Methodist preachers were quick enough to defend. But when it came to the matter of lay representation at the Conference, the majority of the preachers changed their tone. Petitions were burnt unread. The question was discussed again and again: various suggestions as to possible compromise were made; but in the end the "Plan of Pacification" proposed by the Conference in 1795 proved on this point to be no plan of pacification at all, but merely a dogmatic "No." The "Plan of Pacification," it may be incidentally mentioned if for a moment we may turn aside, settled the Sacramental difficulty. Might Methodist preachers administer the Sacrament? Here the preachers and the people were at one. The early idea that the Communion must not be

taken except from the hands of a clergyman of the Establishment (some London Methodists used to bail out a clergyman imprisoned for debt in the Fleet prison when they wanted a Communion service)[1] had to yield to the practical necessities of the situation. The clergy refused the Sacrament to Methodists in many cases, and some arrangement had to be made. The final order, as given in the "Plan," was that the Lord's Supper might be administered if the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders at any Chapel so agreed, and if the consent of the Conference were obtained. This meant that the custom became fixed, since the majorities could nearly always be secured. And of course Methodism thus more clearly marked its inevitable separation from the Established Church. Returning, however, to the question of lay representation, we have to note that the "Plan of Pacification" simply discarded the idea with something like scorn. It formally declared that none of the laity could find entrance through the Conference door: the repudiation of the idea was, in fact, as flat and categorical as it could well be made; and the only concessions subsequently granted (the "Plan" was finally set in order in 1797) concerned such minor matters as the veto of local leaders upon the admission and expulsion of members, and the postponement by the circuits for one year of any new law which the Conference might make. The supremacy of the preachers remained practically untouched, the powerlessness of the laity wholly unremedied. Alexander Kilham and a few others declined to be bound, and preferred to take their own course. Kilham had quitted the Conference rather than append his name when the "Plan of Pacification" was first presented for signature in 1795; and between that time and the end of the discussion in 1797 he had written pamphlets, pressed for explanation of ambiguous phrases, suggested alternatives, and generally disturbed the quietude of those who wanted to see the matter done with. Indeed, so obnoxious did the Methodist authorities hold him that before the "Plan" came to its final shape he had been tried and expelled (at the London Conference of 1796) on an exaggerated if not quite groundless charge of having used

[1] *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, sixth series, ix. 143.

abusive language in his books; but his expulsion is a stain, not upon Kilham's name, but on the record of those who cast him out. Had the ultimate concessions gone further, Kilham might have returned; for he was always meekly ready to ask pardon for undue warmth, and was moreover prepared to stand aside if the cause he had at heart could so be more effectually advanced. But the final refusal of any substantial relief compelled Kilham and his friends to act. In August 1797—shortly after the Leeds Conference put the "Plan" into its final form—Kilham himself, together with William Thom, Alexander Cummin, and Stephen Eversfield, founded the Methodist New Connexion; and although not more than five thousand members followed their lead at the time, the new body grew apace. Its constitution, of course, embodied theoretically from the first, and practically as soon as the growth of the denomination made it possible, the principle for which Kilham and his friends had vainly fought, adequate lay representation upon governing bodies through all their grades up to the Conference itself; and so it was upon that general idea of lay representation that the first secession from the Wesleyan Methodism took place.

Subsequent divisions found their reason rather in practical applications of the general idea than in the abstract general idea itself. That is, religious workers, anxious to embark upon lines of labour which seemed to them to promise rich spiritual results, found themselves discountenanced by the authority next above them—sometimes lay workers by the preachers, sometimes the preachers by the Conference; and severance naturally ensued when conscience did not permit the discountenanced workers to stay their hands under the prohibition which went forth. But in all cases, the resulting new body provided in its polity a means of making the voices of the laity, the rank and file, have their due prominence and carry their due weight. The abstract idea of "lay representation" asserted itself presently, even though it had not been the new body's immediate motive and spring. The "Independent Methodists" came into existence in 1806. Their real origin, however, lies further back and is discernible in a "cottage-meeting" which refused to be stopped when

the authorities decreed the stoppage of such gatherings in 1796. The Methodist circuit at Warrington, being somewhat at a disadvantage by reason of its isolation, had to a considerable extent chosen or made its own independent line; and cottage-meetings were one of the items on the programme it drew up. When these were forbidden, one of the meetings refused to accept its fate, maintaining itself for some years without owning denominational connection at all. Later on Peter Phillips, a Warrington chairmaker, stamped his personality and his views upon this little movement—prominent among his views being that any "official" ministry, separated and paid, was contrary to Scripture: other Societies gathered round the first; and by-and-by it was found that a new denomination had, almost without any one knowing it, been born. In these Societies, as their name implies, the "Independent" idea is carried as far as is possible under any sort of Methodist scheme; and each Church is self-governing so far as may be. The name, however, has varied from time to time. From the fact that a number of Quakers allied themselves with the seceding Methodists, and that many of the seceding Methodists adopted the Quaker dress, the title of "Quaker Methodists" was used for a while. When the denomination was formally constituted in 1806 the name "Independent Methodists" was fixed upon; and, though other names—"United Churches of Christ" and "United Free Gospel Churches"—have been tried, it is as "Independent Methodists" that the body is known to-day.[1] "Primitive Methodism" appeared as the next secession—a secession resulting from the prohibition of "camp-meetings" by the Conference of 1807. Once more, individual activity had outrun official suggestion; and official quarters, not best pleased at being outrun, frowned and forbade. Hugh Bourne and William Clowes had been foremost in conducting through Cheshire and Staffordshire open-air meetings for prayer and preaching on the lines of those which a man named Lorenzo Dow had introduced from America; but although revivals reproducing on a smaller scale the characteristics of the great Evangelical Revival

[1] Besides the authorities given above, consult for this body the *Short History of Independent Methodism*, published to commemorate the centenary.

itself spread round these meetings as circles spread upon the water when an in-flung pebble has given the start, in the eyes of Conference camp-meetings were "highly improper and likely to be of considerable mischief." Bourne, having participated in a camp-meeting immediately after the Conference vetoed them, was expelled in 1808, the reason assigned, however, being the technical one that he had not attended class as required. For the moment, Bourne had no idea of setting up another Church. He gave himself up to evangelism; but the fellowship of workers he gathered round him—"Camp-meeting Methodists" as they were termed—was meant to work in harmony with the existing Methodist organisations. But friction naturally arose, and it was clear that the position could not stand. It was through Clowes that things came to a head. He had yielded to the command of the Conference for a time. But presently he felt that he could not rest; and his renewal of activity upon the forbidden lines resulted in his expulsion in 1810. Thereupon the first sketch-plan for a new denomination was drawn: the followers of Clowes and the "Camp-meeting Methodists" came together as the "Tunstall Circuit"; and the growth which resulted in the Primitive Methodist Church of to-day set in. Once again, as the polity was formed, the democratic idea took sway; and "lay representation" was taken as one of the polity's integral parts. One other Methodist secession of importance, and one of minor significance, have to be named in our present list. William O'Bryan was twice expelled from Methodist Societies—in 1810 and 1814, he having rejoined in the interval—for refusing to confine his evangelistic efforts to the geographical plan laid down in the authorities' rules. O'Bryan had too much of Wesley's spirit to conform strictly to the laws which Wesley's successors laid down; and—if the world was not his parish—certainly so much of the south-west of England as his feet could cover was his parish if and when in its need it seemed to call. So, because the authorities would not be persuaded and O'Bryan would not yield, the "Bible Christians"—"Bryanites" or "Arminian Bible Christians" were names they wore in some quarters for a little while—were born in 1815 at Shebbear on the borders of Dartmoor.

And again, in the Bible Christian polity, as in the other new Methodist polities at which we have already looked, the principle of "lay representation" was closely worked in. The other, and less important, Methodist secession remaining to be set down is that of the "Protestant Methodists" in 1827. The original cause of dispute in this instance was concerned with nothing larger than the placing of an organ in a Wesleyan Church at Leeds; but soon the inevitable question of the rights of the laity crept in. They were not forgotten, it may well be supposed, when the new body was formed. And with the Protestant Methodists the present list may close.

It is a serious and significant fact that it can be so long in the case of a Church still, as was the Wesleyan Church, in its first youth. By-and-by we shall have to observe yet other seceding Churches, as well as the fresh combinations into which some of the earlier ones were grouped. But at the moment, there is an essential significance running through the list we have made and demanding to be understood. It will be seen, if the unity of all these movements behind their superficial differences be discerned, how true it is that through all the movements life was protesting against the tyranny of organisation—that, in other words, it *was* to the pressure of the Nonconformist spirit they were due—and at the same time how the call of the Nonconformist spirit, as the workers in these movements heard it, was translated into a call for the democratic idea. They sought, beyond all doubt, to give life more scope and room to work itself out —sought to help it in its leap over organisation's circumambient walls. That was what their revolt against authority really meant. But they did not enunciate or reach to the fundamental idea which was beseeching recognition at their minds' doors—the idea that organisation must be *made by life*. That the movements of life must not be restrained by organisation—that at least they knew. But, under the circumstances wherein they found themselves, it was to an enlargement of power given to the rank and file that they looked for a righting of what was wrong. This was the reform in structure which, each in its own way and its own degree, the various seceding Methodist Churches carried

through. And inevitably, it was according to the way and the degree in which they did so that they came to define themselves or to be defined by others—not according to their relation to the fundamental Nonconformist idea and ideal. They came to define themselves, and to be defined, against the background of the denomination they had left, and according to the measure in which their embodiment of the "democracy applied to Church affairs" idea exceeded the embodiment given to it there. And so once more the Nonconformist spirit, as it poured itself into the earthen vessels, was mixed with alien things; and though it was indeed served by these people whom it was so eager to capture and to claim, was served but imperfectly, and even while it was served, was misunderstood. One must add, too, that this new misunderstanding of it must have done much to confirm the misunderstanding of it already existing elsewhere; and the older Nonconformist Churches, while they had doubtless helped to start or fix in the newer bodies the view that Nonconformity meant largely the "democratic idea applied to Church affairs," would, as the new bodies defined themselves by their relation to that idea, define themselves against it still more exactly and still more fixedly in their turn.

Turning our glance upon yet another part of the field occupied by "concrete Nonconformity"—that is, by Churches which were outside the Establishment, whether or no their Nonconformist position implied any recognition on their part of the true Nonconformist ideal—we find another force that helped to prevent the older Nonconformist bodies, the inheritors of the old Nonconformist tradition, from realising that they had not reached back to their original standing-ground, or that it was necessary for them to press on. It lay in the increase of that "particularist Nonconformity" whose beginning we chronicled in an earlier section.[1] The Nonconformist associations of this order already mentioned —or some of them—were pursuing their course through all these years; nor is it necessary to say much of their history. Indeed, it lies in the nature of a particularist body that it should have but little history in any sense that implies

[1] Book IV. Chapter I. Section 3.

development, expansion, or ordered change: its very nature —its very attachment to one or more detailed points of doctrine and practice and the exhaustion of its Church-idea in these—tends to leave one year of its life much like the previous one or the next for history's eye. The Moravians —the most intensely vital of those that survived—continued their missionary labours with all the old zeal, adding many lustrous jewels to the crown they already wore. The Sandemanians broke the monotonous sameness which usually colours a particularist body in the only way open to them (and a way, as has been said, which particularist bodies frequently adopt) by a quarrel which broke out at the eighteenth century's end—a quarrel whose precise significance remains somewhat obscure, but which appears to have turned upon the fine question whether "works of faith and love" can add anything to that sense of acceptance with God to which faith (the merely intellectual assent called in Sandemanian doctrine by that name[1]) gradually gives rise. One party, it seems, maintained the affirmative: another party held that intellectual assent to Christian doctrine was sufficient, and so sufficient that nothing else must aspire to help it in its work. On this extremely particularist issue the already particularist body split up into two, each of them a degree more particularist than the parent body had been; nor could subsequent efforts induce the two sections to give one another that "kiss of charity" which forms one of the Sandemanian rites.[2] A few Sandemanians, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, embraced Baptist views,[3] though of course having no connection with the Baptist denominations we know so well. With the exception of the few items here set down, the history of the particularist Nonconformist denominations to which we have been before introduced is summed up in saying that they had no special history to record.

But at least two other particularist denominations were coming into view; and at these we must take a brief glance.

[1] *Supra*, p. 284.

[2] Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, iii. 265-267.

[3] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 288.

It has been mentioned that before the beginning of this period Swedenborgianism was winning disciples here and there. Two clergymen of the Church of England had helped to bring about this result—the Rev. J. Hartley by translating some of Swedenborg's works, and the Rev. J. Clowes (later on) by expounding and defending the Swedenborgian system of religious ideas. At first, however, converts remained for the most part within the Churches to which they already belonged; and indeed many converts have done this up till now. But in 1788 the first Swedenborgian Society was established at Eastcheap in London;[1] and inasmuch as Priestley wrote in confutation of the system in 1791, addressing his book to the members of the "New Jerusalem Church in Birmingham,"[2] it may be inferred that other Churches were springing up where circumstances made the prospect fair. In 1810 a society was formed in Manchester for the circulation of Swedenborg's works, with the result that what previously had been no more than a vaguely understood absurdity became to many the new revelation for which the world had pined and prayed. Since by 1842 there were reported to be between forty and fifty Churches of the order in England,[3] we have to assume through the period now being surveyed a considerable accession to the Swedenborgian ranks; and by the period's close, undoubtedly, Swedenborgianism was well established, as a type of particularist Nonconformity, upon the English ground. An explanation or description of the Swedenborgian faith is far too large an enterprise to be undertaken here.[4] It must suffice to say that the entire body of truth it contains had been given, according to its statement of claim, by special revelation to Swedenborg himself — that at the base of the whole thing lay the doctrine of "correspondences," that is, the idea that there is a "correspondence" between all things in the spiritual

[1] Wilson, *History and Antiquities of the Dissenting Churches of London*, ii. 170. [2] Rutt, *Life and Correspondence of Dr. Priestley*, ii. 121, 138.

[3] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, ii. 384.

[4] For Swedenborgianism, see chiefly Swedenborg's own works; also Bogue and Bennett, *History of Dissenters* (2nd ed.), ii. 447-458; Stoughton, as previous note, ii. 377-385; Wilson, as former note, ii. 165-169. Wilson gives the principal points of the system in tabular or serial form.

world and all things in this—that the scriptures are a sort of cryptogram for which the science of "correspondences" supplies the one infallible key—and that, when unlocked by this key, they yield doctrines quite different from those which they are commonly supposed to teach. Such doctrines, for instance, as that of justification by faith are declared to be utterly false: what is commonly understood by Trinitarianism is similarly condemned, though Swedenborg has a Trinity of his own, which has not (it would appear) existed from eternity, but came into being at the creation of the world; and the redemption wrought by Christ is not a matter which is concerned with, or applied immediately to, the individual soul, but consists in the restoration of order in the spiritual world. There are many other doctrines—such as those of "influxes" from God into man, of heavens and hells Dantesque in their number if in nothing else, of angels and devils, and of other mysteries which for Swedenborg had had all their mystery purged away. In the last resort, it must be remembered, the whole scheme rested upon Swedenborg's word; for although he professed to find all these things in Scripture, he found them there only because, and after, he had received them in those hours of special revelation to which he laid claim. And the obedient member of the community must accept the infallibility of the oracle, and subscribe to every article of a crowded and detailed creed in whose articles there is, for its founder, no "great nor small." Entire and unquestioning acceptance of what Swedenborg chooses to say — divorcing the whole thing from any reference to ordinary standards of human reason and from any estimate of intrinsic probabilities—is, in the final analysis, the *sine quâ non* of membership in the Swedenborgian ranks.

Swedenborgianism will doubtless be considered as not much more than a "freak" denomination—such as it was suggested Muggletonianism might be termed—by not a few. This can scarcely be said of the other particularist body which calls for mention here. It was not till quite the close of our period that the Plymouth Brethren arose; but as their beginning does actually fall on the hither side

of the line, it is in this section that they may find a place.[1] The name we are using for the body, it ought to be said, is not one which the members of the body themselves acknowledge: in point of fact, they repudiate any name other than that of "Christians," of "Christian Brethren"; but since some name they must have, if they are to be spoken of at all, the one usually employed may serve our turn. Plymouth Brethrenism may be said to have begun in certain new convictions which seized the mind of a young student named Groves when he was preparing at Dublin for foreign missionary work under the auspices of the Anglican Church. The convictions alluded to ran in such directions as these: the necessity of a return to primitive apostolic methods in order to a restoration of Christianity's strength; the obligation of aloofness from all things—such as literature, for example—which were soiled by the touch of the ungodly world; the sin of taking payment for ministerial or missionary work; the duties of being baptized by immersion (the doctrine of Plymouth Brethrenism on this matter corresponds with that of the Baptists) and of celebrating the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day; and generally in the direction of an uncompromising literalism in the interpretation of Scripture from cover to cover. Evangelical doctrine had, of course, been held from the start and it retained its place. But although the name of Groves has to be mentioned in any account of the Plymouth Brethren, Groves was not really the founder of the sect. Indeed, when he came back from his missionary labours he found that the whole movement had taken on a shape far more restricted and a colour far more gloomy than he had ever intended. He had not really thought of establishing a separate religious society at all. What he had set his heart upon was the revival of a somewhat ascetic type of piety; but he had not foreseen to what this simple programme was likely to grow. The thing developed under other influence and other guidance than his own. Among those who had foregathered in Dublin at Groves's invitation during the

[1] For Plymouth Brethrenism, consult, besides Neatby's book mentioned among the authorities, a useful chapter in *Church Systems of England in the Nineteenth Century*, by J. Guiness Rogers.

winter of 1827 Darby—originally a curate of the Irish Church, although even in his clerical days his tendency was strong in the same direction as that of Groves—was counted; and Darby, being of strong will and masterful ways, had soon taken the matter into his own hands. A little later on a similar society was formed, with Newton as its guiding spirit, at Plymouth—the place from which the Brethren derive the name by which they are generally known. With Darby and Newton, as with Groves (Newton had met Darby when Darby visited Oxford, and had there sat at his feet), the fundamental idea had been that of putting modern Christianity back upon primitive and apostolic lines, the idea which we have found behind other religious movements ere this; but what this came to mean for them, and what they insisted it must mean for any true Christian man (for so they understood the apostolic lines to have run), was that absolute aloofness from the world and that literalism in Scripture interpretation to which Groves's convictions, indicated above, had pointed. Also, literalism in Scripture interpretation—a chameleon-like idea which shows various colours as it lies upon various minds—led, in this instance, to very special readings of the Bible's prophetic books; and more particularly, insistence on the doctrine of an imminent second coming of Christ—a doctrine for which undoubted apostolic authority could be pleaded—and on the duty of making preparation for it almost the paramount interest of the Christian life, soon took its place high upon the scale of the Brethren's religious ideas. Separateness from the world—not only in spirit and ideals, but in politics, amusements, in almost everything that ordinary people handle, in all things with which the bare necessities of life did not compel contact[1]—and punctiliously literal interpretation of the Bible, with all that this involved, may be taken as Brethrenism's two pillar-ideas; to which it must be added

[1] But the asceticism of the Brethren had its limits. It was chiefly association with the ungodly that was to be avoided. Asceticism in such forms as teetotalism has not, as a rule, been favoured. The natural "gifts of God" are for the use of the faithful. It is *people* that are the evil thing. And yet, as against the exact accuracy of this limitation, we have the fact that some Brethren thought carpets, if not wrong, at least inexpedient (Neatby, *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 41). The whole matter is somewhat confused.

that the idea of "separateness," once established and accepted as regulative, quickly enlarged its sway, and extended itself to mean not only separateness from the world but separateness from all the Churches as well, because these lay all in error just as the world lay all unclean. Indeed, the assumption of non-sectarianism with which the Brethren began was so extreme that it, so to say, tumbled over on the other side. The Church was one. There were no such things as separate Churches: all disciples of Christ formed *one* Church, visible as well as invisible. But this position could only be maintained by saying that those who did not come up to Brethrenism's standard were not disciples of Christ at all. All this, however, although it may serve as an imperfect description of what Brethrenism was and is, says nothing as to the reasons why so many were so speedily enrolled in its ranks. Of course Brethrenism arose—as all particularist Nonconformity arose—from an idea that religious failure might be corrected by pushing conformity on certain points to greater lengths. That general statement holds good. But in this instance it does not tell quite all the story. Probably the real reason of Brethrenism's rapid growth lay in the disappointment felt by numerous Church of England Evangelicals (it was from these that Brethrenism largely drew its recruits) with the powerlessness, dryness, and religious immobility, which about this time were settling upon the Evangelical fold. We shall have to note directly how the Evangelicals within the Church—inspired in the first instance, as we saw them to be, by the Nonconformist spirit, and faced, as movements so inspired within the Establishment always have been faced, by the alternative of going further or dying—had, because they did *not* go further, died as forces under the sway of the Nonconformist ideal. They had really returned to the Conformist side, merely carrying with them as their distinguishing mark that stronger insistence on evangelical doctrines which they had acquired. But under these conditions, the tide of life which, though it had not borne them out to the great ocean, had, so to say, laved their feet and made them feel something of its magic, ebbed away; and many, without clearly understanding, would have within themselves, in proportion to

their sincerity, the witness that something was amiss. It is no wonder that while many less sensitive ones were content that things should remain as they were, others, under the press of disappointment, should feel the need of some new beginning, and should look round for some road up which they might make a fresh spiritual start. Nor is it any wonder that this mood in them — they and their circumstances being what they were—should draw them on to Brethrenism's line. The Church's religious failure had given rise to Evangelicalism: now, though they had both Evangelicalism and the Church (that they had not really given the new spirit which had moved in them a fair trial they would not know) there was religious failure still: the Church had been the factor common to both situations: with Evangelicalism and without it, therefore, the Church had failed. The natural inference was that the Church was wrong, not in part, but through and through. What more natural than that a system which, while keeping firm grasp upon the evangelicalism they still loved and upon the Scriptures whence their loved evangelicalism was drawn, repudiated not only the world but the Church as well, should win their allegiance next? Impulses like these had moved Darby and Newton: impulses like these, we may safely say, moved Brethrenism's new adherents to come in. The tragedy of the thing lay in this — that it was really an effort to heal a wound by driving deeper the weapon which had made it, to correct the spiritual failure which a return upon conformity had induced by making conformity more strict and its standard of reference more narrow. But this those who made the effort would not perceive. From an Evangelicalism disappointed with itself, but yet not recognising the cause of its disappointment nor understanding its own fault, something like Plymouth Brethrenism was the natural issue and result.

The close of our period, however, saw no more than the beginning of Brethrenism's life. As said, it was during the winter of 1827 that the Dublin conclaves held their sittings. Of later developments—of the numerous, almost innumerable, divisions which resulted from the application of the "literal interpretation of Scripture" idea, and of the bitter-

ness accompanying them—some small note must presently be made.[1] For the moment, Brethrenism's start is all that needs to be set down—the addition of Brethrenism to the particularist Nonconformist ranks.

Among the influences which made it harder for the oldest Nonconformist Churches to realise that they had not reached back, or that they needed to reach back, to their original standing-ground, we have counted the enlargement of this particularist Nonconformity, the greater space it occupied upon the field. Religious bodies based upon particularism are compelled, in practice and in the long run, to define themselves by the points which differentiate them from others, rather than by large principles that are deep-rooted and reach far into the natural background of things; and with so many religious associations doing this, the temptation and tendency toward doing likewise becomes stronger even in those which, by their original history and traditions, should define themselves in great and strictly positive ways; while the world at large of course helps the tendency and increases the temptation by dropping into the habit of thus defining all alike, inasmuch as it is the easiest way. And this means that at this time the Congregationalists and Baptists were pressed from a new direction towards defining themselves as the embodiments of the principle of "democracy applied to Church affairs," towards being content with that self-estimate, and towards being oblivious of the vaster and grander idea which they had first entered the world to fulfil. To the other forces which kept them from perceiving the height whereto their journey backward, upward, and home should have been leading them, the extension of particularist Nonconformity undoubtedly added a force new and powerful. They could not and did not themselves become altogether particularist: their descent was too noble for that, the richness left by the past too marked in their blood; but the touch of particularism came upon them, though no more. In respect of the Baptists, indeed, we have noted how something like that touch had come upon them almost from the first, in that they made their special doctrine of baptism—admittedly not the *vital*

[1] *Infra*, pp. 390, 391.

Church-idea—the *foundation* idea of the Church they raised;[1] and it has been a frequently-recurring necessity to remark how the spirit which impelled them to do this, leading as it did among the Calvinistic Baptists to internal controversy such as that on the question of Communion open or close, tended to blind them, perhaps more than their Congregational brethren, to the content of cardinal Nonconformist ideas. It is not quite accurate, therefore, to say that in this period the touch of particularism came upon the Baptists for the first time. But we may say that whatever tendency to particularism, or to something like it, already possessed them could not but be accentuated by the enlargement of particularist Nonconformity which was going on. And this, moreover, may be a convenient point at which to gather up one or two loose threads of Calvinistic Baptist history by saying that the new influences bringing the touch of particularism from without were in their case assisted by new outbreaks of forces already working in the same direction from within. The exceptional insistence on hyper-Calvinistic views which we saw the Calvinistic Baptists maintaining at the time of the Evangelical Revival[2] was bringing about a reaction in some of their members at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the next; and a controversy started—Andrew Fuller and Joseph Martin being the protagonists on the "lower" and "higher" Calvinistic sides respectively—which burnt hotly for a while.[3] The Communion dispute had its turn after the new century dawned, and was argued, both learnedly and temperately, between Joseph Kinghorn, who fought on the exclusive side, and Robert Hall, who advocated the more liberal view.[4] Any breaking out of internal disputes within a religious body necessarily leads to an adoption of the method of "definition of differences" by the parties *within* the Church, and, if the Church have any tendency in that direction already, must accentuate it as regards the Church's self-definition *as a whole* against other Churches at its side. And any Church so placed must be more open to the pressure of any kindred influence from

[1] Vol. I. p. 303.
[2] *Supra*, p. 251.
[3] Ivimey, *History of the English Baptists*, iv. 87, 88.
[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 265-269.

beyond itself. With the Calvinistic Baptists that was the posture in which things stood. The sum of it, therefore, is this. Both the Congregationalists and Calvinistic Baptists were bound to feel some influence from the extension of particularist Nonconformity around them, though the Baptists — having already the touch of particularism upon them and something of the mood of particularism within them, this mood happening also to be in one of its periods of effervescence at the time—would feel it more. Under this influence, while neither Congregationalists nor Baptists would become altogether and actually particularist themselves, the method of "definition by differences" would thrust itself more deeply in—which is to say that the need of large and profound fundamental Church-ideas and Church-ideals would be by so much the less likely to come to new realisation where the realisation had died.

As to the influence of particularist Nonconformity and its spread in keeping back the ultimate Nonconformist ideal from Nonconformity's view, that is what must be said. But let it be remembered, in summarising the whole position, that the influence of particularist Nonconformity was conjoining itself to the other influences, negative or positive, spoken of before. It by no means stood alone. For one point, there was nothing, either in Nonconformity's renewed religious life or in Nonconformity's renewed struggle for fuller freedom, that *in itself* suggested a far-off forgotten and lost ideal; for both these renewals could be justified, could justify themselves, without reference to anything of the kind. And for another point, with the Nonconformist spirit working itself out in the new Methodist Churches, as they came into life, in such wise as to suggest that the Nonconformist ideal meant "democracy applied to Church affairs," the Churches which already interpreted the Nonconformist ideal in that way would (albeit they may themselves have done much to make such interpretation by the new Churches possible or easier) be strongly confirmed therein. It was not one thing, but many things, that hindered the true summit of Nonconformity's journey backward, upward, and home from outlining itself clear against the sky. And a review of the whole situation brings us back to the verdict

which was pronounced by anticipation when the section began—that Nonconformity, so far as its apprehension of the ultimate ideal is concerned, did indeed maintain during this period the ground it had won, but gained no more.

To this general statement, however, the Quakers are, as was said at the beginning of the present survey, the one exception. It will be remembered how in a recent estimate of their position[1] we noted that they remained practically uninfluenced by the Evangelical Revival to which other Nonconformist bodies owed so much, and that their period of spiritual renewal started later than that of the rest; though we added that inasmuch as they were only *one* step down from their original ideal, the return journey, once begun, was more swiftly made. It was about the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth that the signs of spiritual renewal showed clear. Strictly speaking, indeed, the primary Quaker ideal had been overlaid rather than forgotten and forsaken; and it only needed that some souls of keen spiritual vision should arise among the Quakers in order to remove the covering layers. The disputes as to details of conduct, engrossing as they were, formed so to say no more than a thin crust beneath which the repressing waters waited for their release, and which the rays from spiritually sensitive and aspiring natures might quickly break through. Such natures appear in Quaker history just at this time. John Woolman belongs to America; but his *Journal*[2] may be taken as representing the best English Quaker experiences as well as his own—and indeed, American and English Quakerism were closely linked—and the experiences it records recall those of George Fox. William Forster was a shining example of deep inward religion combined with earnest care for evangelical truth: indeed, it was his life's aim to show that the two things were really one.[3] Stephen Grellet, though doubly a foreigner, since he was a Frenchman driven from his home by the Revolution and was domiciled in the United States, exerted great influence in England on his visits there, and did much to restore the old insight and richness for many in

[1] *Supra*, pp. 257-262. [2] There is an edition in *Everyman's Library*.
[3] See *Memoirs of William Forster*, edited by B. Seebohm.

whom Quaker knowledge had faded and Quaker experience grown poor.[1] Nor did this return upon fundamentals of the inner life do anything—how should it?—to diminish the ardour for practical service which the Quakers had always preserved. To their unfaltering support of those who laboured for the slave-trade's abolition reference has already been made.[2] Elizabeth Fry followed in Howard's steps, taking the lot of the women as her particular care, and devoting her own material and spiritual resources to the material and spiritual good of the unhappy prisoners of her own sex.[3] William Allen stands high upon the list of Christian philanthropists' names.[4] Of Lancaster's labours in the educational cause mention has already appeared.[5] So "a vision and a service once more began to appear, and a new succession of leaders arose. . . . The life of the Society was allowed more and more to depend upon vital fellowship and discipleship, and many of the tests by which outward conformity had been enforced fell into disuse."[6] From that time onward Quakerism has borne its old testimony—whether or no the world, or even the Church in general, has understood what the Quaker testimony really is—to the direct communication of a veritable divine life from divine sources to man, and so bears its testimony to-day. It cannot, however, be said that its spiritual revival meant revival in numbers too. Indeed, in respect of numbers, it meant diminution rather than increase. A Quaker preacher remarks almost simultaneously that while he thinks "true spiritual religion" to be on the increase in many parts of the country, not many young people are coming forward to fill the gaps left by those whom death has called.[7] Perhaps the absence of numerical growth is not very surprising. For though Quakerism could thus return by a single step to its original ideal, it must be remembered that this ideal—even as Fox himself had held it—was imperfect in that it

[1] See *Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labours of Stephen Grellet*, edited by B. Seebohm.
[2] *Supra*, pp. 260, 320.
[3] See *Life of Elizabeth Fry*, by Susanna Corder.
[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. 366.
[5] *Supra*, p. 303.
[6] Braithwaite, *Spiritual Guidance in Quaker Experience*, pp. 79, 80.
[7] *Memoirs of William Forster* (ed. B. Seebohm), i. 48, 60.

failed to provide for any means whereby life could work itself out into organisation; that only for purposes of "discipline" had Fox, at a later stage, brought organisation in; and that the Quaker revival carried in its very occurrence a confession that "discipline" had been stretched too far, had covered too many details with its hand, and must be pushed back within its proper bounds. Even now little or nothing in the way of a Church, built on Quaker foundations, came into being. On this point there was practically no advance beyond the position Fox had held. What had happened, so far as external matters were concerned, was merely that the multitude of points in which it was necessary for the Quaker to show himself different from other Christian men had been cut down. That was all. And many, while thankful for the re-conception of the first high Quaker idea of a veritable divine life directly communicated to man, would feel—since the witness of separateness from the members of other Churches was no longer specially enforced, and since no definite Church organisation was set up as a point of attachment for them—that the first high Quaker idea might better be carried into existing Churches than advocated outside. We are dealing, of course, on this as on many other occasions, with tendencies which would not clearly interpret themselves to those whom they affected and ruled. It is not meant that considerations like those just suggested would be universally argued out, though in some cases even this would be done. But they would be more or less vaguely felt, and would bring about their natural result. Also, of course, the working out of that result would be gradually wrought. Quakerism's revival of its old ideal—because it was accompanied by a breaking down of that idea of separateness which excessive "discipline" had embodied, and because it was *not* accompanied by such a correction of Quakerism's original mistake as the appearance of a more definite and articulated Church-organisation would have supplied—might easily result in the dispersion of many Quaker adherents among other ecclesiastical folds. Something of the kind has, by many evident tokens, been going on in our midst since the nineteenth century began. And unreserved recognition must be

made of the spiritual profit which other Churches have thus received—a profit which there is no means of measuring and doubtless greater than can ever be known. Yet one cannot help feeling, too, that the witness borne by the Quaker "dispersion" must have lost something in the process of transferring its home; and while grateful for the good Quakerism has wrought when it has passed into other religious communities, one is yet more grateful for the stronger witness to Quakerism's fundamental truth borne by the small band which has upheld the distinctive Quaker flag. And above one's two gratitudes, one wishes that it had been found possible for revived Quakerism to give to both life *and* organisation each its proper place, and so to pursue the apostleship on behalf of the complete Nonconformist ideal which would then have been within its powers. However, returning from gratitudes and wishes, our immediate point is that Quakerism in this period took its one step home, recovered the old ideal both as to its greatness and as to its lack, and, because it reproduced the original lack as well as the original greatness, restricted the service to the Nonconformist ideal which, had it reproduced the greatness without the lack, it might so well have given. New difficulties were waiting not far ahead, as we shall presently see;[1] and as a consequence of the confusion they entailed, Quaker numbers were to drop yet more. But in the main, Quakerism was safe upon its old ground.

One other spot upon the religious field—a spot where, though it was not included within concrete Nonconformity's boundaries, the Nonconformist spirit had been at work—our enquiry has still to visit. It is the spot occupied by the Evangelicals within the Established Church. We saw, at their first emergence into our view, how the Evangelicals were inspired by the same spirit, though in lesser degree, as that which inspired the more aggressive section of the great Revival; how in them, as in the Methodists, the energising push and protest was that of life against organisation's too imperious claims; how, in brief, it *was* the Nonconformist spirit whose call, though without fully understanding, they had heard. We saw how they were zealous for the

[1] *Infra*, pp. 364-368.

evangelical doctrines of justification by faith and atonement wrought by Christ; but we saw also how they restrained their zeal, being unprepared to adopt methods to which the Church's *imprimatur* had not been given. Some of the leading names of their earlier period we set down.[1] When our present period began, the bearers of some of those names were doing their finest work, and the Evangelical school as a whole was moving towards the highest point of usefulness and success it was destined to reach. Into the nineteenth century stretched the lives of John Newton, Thomas Scott, Richard Cecil, Isaac Milner (his brother Joseph, the historian, another of the school, passed away three years before the century began), and most of all Charles Simeon, the Cambridge scholar and saint. Then as the early years of the century wore on, the "Clapham Sect" came to be the chief depository of Evangelicalism's spirit and secret, the chief fount of Evangelicalism's power; and in the southern "holy village," as Clapham was called, in the district where evangelical laymen like Henry Thornton, William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay, and Granville Sharp, had their homes, and where John Venn, son of the Henry Venn mentioned on an earlier page, was a parish rector after their own hearts, the finest fruits of the Evangelical movement were found.[2] To them came Evangelicals from other quarters for converse, counsel, and fellowship; and though Cambridge, too, had a galaxy of shining Evangelical lights, Clapham came to be in some sort the headquarters of the school. Of the noble part played by the Claphamites in every good work—of Wilberforce's and Clarkson's devoted efforts for the abolition of slavery, of the association of all these men with fellow-Christians of other Churches in philanthropic and religious endeavour, of the consecration and earnestness which diffused their sweet-smelling savour far and wide—of all these things history has made a beautiful and familiar tale. So far the Evangelical story is fair. But by the time our period was closing, a change was settling in. One looks vainly for any

[1] *Supra*, pp. 241, 242.

[2] See Stephen's paper on "The Clapham Sect," in *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* (4th ed.), pp. 521-582; also Balleine, *A History of the Evangelical Party in the Church of England.*

great succession to the great Evangelical company of the century's early days. Occasional great men there are; but a great succession there is not. Nor is the explanation obscure or hard. From the first, Evangelicalism within the Church, faced by the inevitable alternative of going further or dying—that alternative on which every movement of the Nonconformist spirit within a predominantly Conformist Church must necessarily decide—had chosen wrongly. It had refused to go further; and in the end it had, as an embodiment of the Nonconformist spirit, to die. It had refused to let the strong protest and demand of life have its way and its will: it had allowed the new life-movement within to be bound by the very fetters from which that life-movement was seeking to free it; and the consequences were sure. For Evangelicalism, conformity to the established order and organisation had been put into the higher place, permitted to be the regulative idea after all, notwithstanding the inward impulse to a reversal of standards which Evangelicalism had known: Evangelicalism had been anxious that the stream of new life should be poured into ready-made moulds instead of being allowed to flow as and where it would; and so after all Evangelicalism had passed over to the Conformist side. From the service of the Nonconformist spirit it turned away. Life had to yield to organisation, though it forced its penalty as it always does. And this meant that when the first store of strength was spent, the very doctrines on which Evangelicalism insisted so strongly came to be held as if the mere holding of them were an end in itself—held, that is, in the Conformist way; and this meant, in its turn, since the mind's acceptance of doctrinal *formulae* can do little or nothing to bring about spiritual results, that spiritual dulness and feebleness returned. Evangelicalism, in fact, had turned those very doctrines to which the Nonconformist spirit had driven it because they pointed to the *sources* of a vital experience, into a substitute for the vital experience to which, under right handling, they might have been the guides. One can find little fault with what Dean Church says of it. "It never seemed to get beyond the 'first beginnings' of Christian teaching, the call to repent, the assurance of forgiveness; it had nothing to

say to the long and varied processes of building up the new life of truth and goodness; it was nervously afraid of departing from the consecrated phrases of its school, and in the perpetual iteration of them it lost hold of the meaning they may once have had."[1] And Church's picture corresponds with that of all other writers who deal with the Evangelical school after its first glory had gone. "Their theology revolved so much on a very few central points," writes Stephen, "as to induce a disastrous facility in catching a superficial acquaintance with it, and in reproducing it in a plausible imitation."[2] Something like what Church's picture indicates Evangelicalism was tending to become at the time we have reached; and something like this, it must be added, Evangelicalism has ever since continued to be. There was passion in Evangelicalism still, but it spent itself on the emphasis of ideas, which were somehow supposed to have a magical power of soul-renewal—a thing ideas in themselves never have. Evangelicalism clung to the evangelical doctrines still, and so far was worthy of its old name; but it clung to them with an inquisitor's rather than with an apostle's zeal. Of course, many individual members of the school have risen above the limitations of the school itself. But *as* a school, the Evangelicals took the road indicated in what has been said. How some of them, recognising and mourning over the fact of spiritual decadence, yet not understanding its real reason, sought to find their remedy in the shelter of Plymouth Brethrenism's tents—sought to find a remedy, that is, by carrying still further the return to conformity which had really been the snare—we saw a little while ago. But with the Evangelicals as a whole life—because its claims had not been yielded and its summons had only been imperfectly heard—because Evangelicalism chose wrongly when the inevitable alternative faced it, and let conformity once again take the upper hand of the life that sought to be maker, mover, inspirer, and all in all—with the Evangelicals as a whole life took its sure revenge, and withdrew its warmer and richer currents from the channel through which the school would have forced it to run. Evangelicalism

[1] *The Oxford Movement*, p. 13.
[2] *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* (4th ed.), p. 444.

became in the main a passionate adherence to evangelical ideas rather than a passionate experience of vital religion —which means that as an exponent and servant of the Nonconformist spirit, Evangelicalism ceased to be.

So ends our survey of the field. And the final verdict is once again this—that, allowing for one exception on the right side in the case of the Quakers, and for one exception on the wrong side in the case of the Evangelicals, the Nonconformist spirit kept the ground it possessed, but won no more. And upon Nonconformity as a whole the vision of the ultimate goal to which its journey backward, upward, and home should lead it had not dawned.

CHAPTER III

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

SECTION 1

The Period in General

WE turn now to the final period we have to survey, the period running from 1828 to the nineteenth century's close. The nineteenth century is by common consent taken to be one of the most important in the country's history; nor is there any idea of disputing that verdict here. It may be said, however, that its importance varies according to the standpoint from which the glance is thrown across it; and it does not follow that because it is outstanding in literature, science, invention, and general political progress, it must be equally exceptional in regard to all other categories which can be framed. Also it is still really too close for exact estimate. Possibly some of the enthusiasm now spent upon it may turn out to have been somewhat excessive when a longer space of time separates the century from the observer, and when distance—which has sometimes to give truth, as well as lend enchantment, to the view—has caused all the details to drop into the general perspective in truer ways. Only when it is not only events and facts, but the relations between one event or fact and another, and still more between one event or fact and the background as a whole, that can be seen, is it possible to estimate rightly the significance of any temporal stretch; and this is not possible until intervening years have pushed the judge further away from the particular temporal stretch he surveys. Doubtless the

nineteenth century will always wear the crown with which we see it invested now. But it may be that those jewels in the crown which shine most brightly to-day will pale beside others as time goes on. And bearing this possibility in mind, judgments upon a period which lies so near us can be no more than tentatively held.

From the standpoint which all through this book we have been occupying—the standpoint of the ultimate Nonconformist ideal and its embodiment in concrete Nonconformist historic facts—the century is perhaps less distinguished than is sometimes supposed. Nonconformity quite correctly counts the century as one of great achievements; but the achievements were in the main along one particular line, the line of enlarged liberty and nearer approach to equality with the Established Church; and when we enquire how much progress was made towards a realisation of and a resettlement upon that ultimate Nonconformist principle to which we have been watching Nonconformity slowly coming home, the reply can hardly be very exultantly given. That some progress was made —at any rate that occasionally Nonconformist eyes pierced onward and caught a glimpse of the far-off goal—we shall see. But we shall scarcely find that the goal was constantly and clearly discerned; and we shall scarcely be able to say that at the period's end Nonconformity's homeward journey was triumphantly done. It may be—for the previous caution recurs—that as to the significance of particular points of Nonconformist history, only a provisional and tentative verdict can be delivered. But the general statement just made will hold good.

A somewhat more precise characterisation of the period may be advisable before we pass on to deal with its facts. And the characterisation may be given thus. To the century's end Nonconformity (it is to those Nonconformist bodies which were by inheritance and tradition really the Nonconformist spirit's vehicles, however poorly they served it, not to those, "particularist" or other, which were only Nonconformist by accident and really Conformist at heart, that the statement applies)—to the century's end Nonconformity followed the two pursuits to which it had

committed itself on the two "platforms of return" we have already seen it pass. We have now watched it—let it be recalled—taking two steps on the journey backward, upward, and home. It climbed on to the platform of revived religion and religious work as the Evangelical Revival stirred its blood. That was the first step. Then it climbed on to the platform of larger concern for toleration and freedom as that fuller self-consciousness which was an inevitable, though not an immediate, consequence of revived religion clutched at its heart and drove it on. That was the second step. And Nonconformity of course preserved, as it mounted the second platform, the spirit it had caught as it mounted the first: that is, its renewed religion kept company with its renewed quest of freedom; so that Nonconformity was accordingly guided by a double star. But even with the two "platforms of return" thus conquered, Nonconformity had not, so far as we have followed its progress, understood how much further the return had yet to go. The *ultimate* goal was not discerned. The full significance, the entire implication, of the doctrine that organisation must be made by life, that all Church order must be merely an inward life clothing itself with visible dress, had not dawned, or re-dawned, upon Nonconformity's mind. What we have seen in the period to which we are now turning is in most respects what, according to this *résumé*, we saw in the period just gone by. Yet one point of difference, and a very significant one, stands out. Nonconformity was still, through the seventy-two years lying before us, bent upon maintaining both its religious earnestness and its struggle for freedom (the latter in more intensified ways, in ways so intensified that the phrase "the struggle for equality" may fairly be taken as the entire period's name), and at the same time unawakened to the ultimate Nonconformist conception which needed to be recalled. But the point of difference lies here. Now and again into Nonconformity's forgetfulness the waiting Nonconformist spirit sent some disturbing and reminding influence: now and again there swept across Nonconformity's heedlessness a faintly-whispered suggestion from afar: now and again Nonconformity received some warning that

religious earnestness, however unfailing, and passion for the high principle of freedom, however strenuous, were not enough, and could not exhaust the mission for which Nonconformity had been sent. Nonconformity did not always understand. The suggestions of the ultimate Nonconformist spirit were sometimes misinterpreted, sometimes read as if they had come from some source inferior to the real; and Nonconformity's actions in regard to them, even when well-meant, were often curiously inadequate or warped. Some of the reasons for this lack of understanding will appear as the story goes on. Nonconformity did not always understand. Nor, indeed, would it always listen to those who did. Nevertheless, the Nonconformist spirit was seeking all the while to press in—to recapture the full allegiance so sadly, and yet only ignorantly, withheld—to make Nonconformity carry on both its religious life and its struggle for freedom under loftier impulses than those it was feeling, and against a background of more majestic ultimate ideals than those it knew. So of the period as a whole we may say that, while it does not show us Nonconformity with its homeward journey done, it does show us Nonconformity with a dawning, at least with an intermittent, consciousness that there were further stretches of the journey to be made.

This is what we shall see as our glance sweeps across the historic facts. It must take its sweep quickly; for to dally too long upon single facts or upon isolated groups of facts would be to cut ourselves off from our main purpose and idea; and any attempt to touch upon them all would mean that we should have a multiplicity of detail which would cause that purpose and idea to be lost. And backward and forward the glance must sweep—that is, it cannot finish at once with every point of time, but may have to return again to some points of time for a further survey; for it may be necessary to deal separately with facts or groups of facts which chronologically lie side by side, since it may be in quite different ways that these illustrate our main purpose and idea; while on the other hand our main purpose and idea may be illustrated in similar ways by facts or groups of facts which chronologically lie wide apart. But

for cautions like these those who have grasped what has already been said will be amply prepared.

Section 2

The Religious Side

Authorities.—Stoughton's *History of Religion in England 1800–1850* (with a postscript to 1880) is specially interesting for much of this period, as Stoughton knew personally many of the leading men engaged in its events. The same may be said, so far as specifically Congregational leaders are concerned, of Waddington's *Congregational History*. Bennett's *History of Dissenters 1808–1838* only serves us for the first ten years, but Dale's *History of English Congregationalism*, *The New History of Methodism*, and Skeats and Miall in *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, cover nearly the entire time. For the Quakers, the particularist Churches, and the other religious bodies, the footnotes give the most important sources. But much of the general atmosphere of the time, and many of the smaller incidents which help to show up the larger, must be gathered from the religious newspapers and magazines, such as the *Evangelical Magazine*, the *Congregational Magazine*, the *Christian World*, and the *British Weekly*. Biographies of leading men, some of which are mentioned in the course of the section, are also very helpful.

It is with Nonconformity on its distinctly religious side—with Nonconformity in respect of its inner development or self-construction and its discharge of its specific religious mission in the world—that our survey had best begin. Here we shall find Nonconformity earnestly pursuing the religious enterprises, both internal and external, if they may so be distinguished, on which from the time of the Evangelical Revival onwards it had set and kept its hand, with the push and pull of the ultimate Nonconformist ideal every now and again making itself felt, yet not in most instances fully recognised for what it was. And it is to the formation of the Congregational and Baptist Unions in the 'thirties that we may at first direct our glance. At the earlier attempt, practically abortive, to form a Congregational Union we have already looked.[1] In 1832, however, the attempt was renewed with greater energy and better success; or, rather, in that year the results were gathered up of deliberations which had been going on for four years before. One is not surprised that the attempt should, in spite of the previous failure, be remade; for any single Churches basing them-

[1] *Supra*, pp. 324, 325.

selves, however imperfectly, upon the Nonconformist conception, must be drawn together by the consciousness that each one of them is but a manifestation of something coming from a common source, and that the life of each, if it be traced back far enough, mingles at last with that which is the life of all. They are not producers, but products, of life; and true union—so easily lost on the first reckoning—is ensured on the second. Indeed, against the frequently-made charge that while Conformity means union, Nonconformity means disunion, it may be replied that, while Conformity signifies no more than an external accommodation and adjustment in which no oneness of spirit may be implied, Nonconformity (rightly understood) stands for that oneness which the meeting of spirit with spirit alone creates. What each Church living by the Nonconformist spirit recognises in every similar Church is the life which makes it meeting *itself* in the fellow Church, the life there having, so to say, come from the same starting-point by another route; and from such recognition fellowship is bound to come. The impulse to fellowship is, in fact, very positive indeed in the Nonconformist ideal. And among the Congregationalists at this time the impulse was strongly at work. The idea of a "Union" appears to have suggested itself in more than one quarter almost simultaneously; and a rather acrimonious dispute as to priority and leadership—one without real bearing upon the matter, and one into which we need not look—sprang up between the County Association of Dorset, which seemed inclined to claim patent rights in the project, and a London Committee which had the matter in charge.[1] This, however, passed over, and the ground was cleared. A preliminary meeting in May 1831 laid down in certain resolutions the lines on which the constitution of the proposed Union might best be framed; and at a meeting in the following year the Union was definitely formed,[2] one important modification, however, being made in the plan the resolutions put forth. Whereas these had suggested that the

[1] The details are to be found by any one who wishes to see them in Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. 348-357.

[2] Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. 360, 361; Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 691-694; Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800-1850*, ii. 106-111.

Union should be a union of "County or District Associations" —that is, that the County or District Associations should be the units from and by which the representatives in the general body should be chosen—according to the final decision the Union was to be a "Union of County or District Associations *and* of Churches," which meant (since the latter part of the clause was, of course, the determinative one) that the Churches should by their representatives build up the Unions as a whole.[1] During the previous discussion and Conferences up and down the country considerable fear had been expressed lest the formation of the Union should by some means turn Congregationalism into a "sect"; which fear really looked toward the possibility of something like the episcopal hierarchy being reproduced within Congregational territory and of the enforcement by that hierarchy of settled creeds and rules; and probably some fear of the kind lay behind the change which the meeting of 1832 decided to make. County or District Associations were, of course, themselves composed of elected representative members; and one cannot wonder at the creeping in of a suspicion that if a number of boards, themselves elected, proceeded to elect a still higher board, that higher board might in the end turn out to be not really representative of the Congregational rank and file, and might even arrogate to itself powers inconsistent with the Congregational "democratic" idea. An assertion that the Union would assume no authority over the Churches was indeed clearly made, and has remained part of the Union's constitution from that day to this. It was only for purposes of mutual counsel, fellowship, help, sympathy and the like, that the Union was to be formed. But the suspicion had to be reckoned with none the less. For the time being, it was strong enough to bring about the change of plan indicated just now. The instinct was a sound one; for it pointed out not only the danger of which men were conscious, but one of whose existence they were not aware, a danger which, under the circumstances, did threaten not only the actual Congregational, but the true Nonconformist, ideal. Certainly when the final significance of the Nonconformist spirit is not fully realised any extension

[1] On the implication of the change, see Dale, as previous note, p. 695.

of organisation, in such ways as a Union based on "County and District Associations" implies, must push the recovery of such full realisation still further away; for it is adding on to the organisation already existing a further organisation which does not, either at one remove or two, emerge from innermost life, but merely has its root in the organisation next below. And a Church which does this really takes a step along the Conformist way, incurring some, at any rate, of a Conformist Church's risks. At the same time, it must be added that the distinction between the two bases of Union-construction had importance *only* because for Congregationalism's eyes the original Congregational and Nonconformist ideal had been so far eclipsed. For if all organisation were being really made by life, organisation might, as circumstances demand, spread itself in wider and wider circles, and still each circle would be the outcome, not of the circle immediately within it, but of the impulse given at the centre; and thus, however far organisation might be carried, the Nonconformist principle would remain inviolate through it all. The change of basis adopted in 1832 did, therefore, guard not only against the danger foreseen by those who made the change, but against a subtler danger still; and the makers of the change really bore witness to the fact that something more than they knew was wrong. It may be added (since on this topic we are compelled to look beyond the nineteenth century with which our story, generally speaking, ends) that similar considerations apply to the alterations made in the constitution of the Union at a later date. For in 1904 something like the earlier proposal of the resolutions was reverted to, at least to the extent that a "Congregational Council" elected by the Council Associations was superimposed upon the "Union of Churches," and much of the work of the Union as a whole and of its affiliated Societies passed gradually into the Council's hands.[1] Once again it may be said that, in the absence of a revival

[1] Dr. Parker was the leader in advocating the change: indeed, the conception of a "United Congregational Church" was emphatically his own, though the details were worked out by others. See his addresses from the Chair (delivered in 1901) in the *Congregational Year Book* for 1902. The new Constitution of the Union appears for the first time in the *Congregational Year Book* for 1905. See also Dale, as former note, pp. 696-698.

of the ultimate Nonconformist idea in its full meaning, the policy steps upon the Conformist line; while, did such a revival come, that could no more be said, and the proposal as to adopting the policy would become merely the problem whether innermost life called for it or not. Reverting, however, to the incidents comprised within our proper limits, the summary is this—that in the constituting of the Union a real impulse of the Nonconformist spirit was at work, since life must always seek to perfect the organisation wherein it is dressed; but that the real driving force to which the human agents submitted themselves was not recognised for what it was, that the warning by which it designed to secure a re-recognition of its own greatness was mistranslated into a warning against tampering with the "democracy applied to Church affairs" idea, and that it did not by any means have all its implications read. No clear declaration of the Nonconformist Church-ideal appears as the records are scanned; and had that ideal been discerned, it must on an occasion such as that have been shaped in speech. Indeed, the clauses dealing with the Congregational Church-conception in the "Declaration of Faith and Order"[1] issued at the Union's formation sound poor and thin indeed when one recalls the lost grandeur of earlier Independent days. The failure to discern the true ideal, too, lay back of the discussions which took place concerning the advisability or non-advisability of adopting any statement of belief.[2] But since what is to be said on that point may more conveniently find a place when a later incident comes under notice, all we do here is to record the fact that a "Declaration of Faith" was actually adopted, together with the "Declaration of Order," touching upon most of the main points of common evangelical doctrine, though the "Declaration" was put forward not as a binding creed but as a statement of what Congregationalists generally believed.[3] Passing now for a moment from the Congregational to the Baptist Union, we may say,

[1] The "Declaration" appears annually in *The Congregational Year Book.*

[2] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 477, 478.

[3] It had been at first proposed that a statement to this effect should be embodied in the "Declaration" itself. This was not done, but a letter was sent out making the point clear (*Congregational Magazine*, New Series, ix. 442).

without dwelling at length upon the forming of the latter, that the matter has much the same general "atmosphere" as that of its fellow. The Baptist Union came into existence (though it will be remembered that there had been an earlier movement with the Baptists as well as with the Congregationalists) in the same year as the Congregational: it was viewed at first with something of the same suspicion, which suspicion indeed lasted longer in the Baptist case; and by degrees, as the suspicion vanished away, the Union achieved its place in the affection of the Baptist Churches at large.[1] It followed on much the same lines of development as the Congregational Union; and in later years it imitated the Congregational Union by initiating a somewhat more elaborate organisation than that with which it began. But as in the case of the Congregational Union, a vivid or even clear appreciation of the high Nonconformist principle is lacking. The old point must be made again—that the Baptists were even more hampered than were others in this respect by having made their special baptismal doctrine one of the chief points in their Church-idea. And thus all the incidents connected with the formation of both Unions show, both in what was done and what was left undone, that the voice of the Nonconformist spirit was calling, its hand stretched out, but that those who heard and felt did not know whence voice or hand had come.

Elsewhere other illustrations of the same general truth are to be found. We saw in the previous section how the Quakers had taken their one necessary step back upon their original standing-ground, but how—since even on that original standing-ground the relation between life and organisation had not been fully worked out for the Quaker mind—the recovery of it brought its own difficulties, prevented Quakerism from keeping upon its own disciples the firm and abiding hold it might have had, and so left the Quakers (though the Quaker "dispersion" has had an honourable influence in other religious communities through all the years) to be a select and even dwindling minority as time went on. Shortly after our present period began, new difficulties appeared; and that intellectual confusion,

[1] Skeats and Miall, as former note, pp. 605-607.

more than once previously referred to as having descended upon Quakerism because it pressed the doctrine of the "inner light" too far,[1] prevented the Society from dealing adequately or squarely with the crisis it had to face. The original source of the new difficulty lay in the heresies of Elias Hicks—an American Quaker who practically abandoned the essential truths not only of Quakerism but of Christianity itself, and substituted for these something in the nature of "mystical Deism," a system in which the work of Christ and Christ Himself counted for nothing save as inspiration and example, and in which the idea of "inner light" came to stand for the idea that in respect of all spiritual aims the natural man was sufficient unto himself. In America Hicks drew multitudes away; and fear was naturally felt lest English Quakerism should catch the disease and suffer in similar ways. In attempting to avert the danger, however, confusion upon confusion arose. There is no evidence at all that Hicksite ideas spread to any considerable extent on this side; and the tragic element in the thing is that all the confusions came about not in dealing with heresy, but in dealing with a suspicion that heresy was there or a dread that it might come. The yearly meeting of 1829 (it was in 1825 that the Hicksite doctrines obtained their vogue in the States) asserted the Quaker faith in the Person and work of Christ; and the assertion was definite as any assertion well could be. But with a good many members of the Society consciousness of a certain unsatisfactoriness in the general position remained. It was justified so far as this—that Quakerism, being re-established upon Fox's platform, was undoubtedly exposed to the same danger as that which had menaced, and in part conquered, it there before; that is, it was possible that some might base themselves upon Fox's *account* of his inner experience rather than upon the inner experience itself, might forget that "inner light" really meant "inner life,"[2] and so might drop away from the realities of the Christian faith into a formless mysticism which had no Christian connections at all. The *possibility* of lapse into something like the heresies of Elias Hicks did, in fact, exist. And it is small wonder—with the American schism taking place on a scale so large

[1] *Supra*, pp. 133-136, 258, 259, 261. [2] Vol. I. pp. 366, 367.

—that the consciousness of this possibility should intensify for some into a consciousness of imminent disaster, or even into a feeling that disaster had already occurred. In reality, the consciousness possessing them should have been recognised for what it was—the Nonconformist spirit demanding that organisation *and* life should find each its place, the former at any rate to the extent that the process of receiving and maintaining inner life should be organised and formulated for thought in such fashion as to attach it to the true Christ-source. But intellectual confusion prevented the real issue from being seen ; and the consciousness of something wanting became a mere panic fear. And as a result, emphasis upon the orthodoxies came to be so stressed by the anxious members of the Society that the rest grew into an anxiety of their own—an anxiety lest Quakerism's specific witness to a real mystical experience should be overborne by the witness to Quakerism's orthodoxy, and the main reason of Quakerism's existence should thus disappear. This was the situation which took some years to settle down. What had come upon Quakerism was the necessity of making a true adjustment between life and organisation on the doctrinal side, as the necessity of doing it on the disciplinary side had come upon it before. And the new necessity was as confusedly met as the old had been. Those who had persuaded themselves that the Hicksite doctrines had widely infected the Quaker ranks called more and more loudly for official disavowals ; and although official disavowals were given, they clamoured for disavowals completer still. On the other hand, the main body and its leaders saw themselves being lured towards making correctness of doctrinal formulas rather than intensity of inward spiritual life the predominant interest ; and they felt bound to make a stand. When Isaac Crewdson published *The Beacon*—a book controverting the Hicksite faults—it was so little an exposition of the Society's essential purpose and mission that the Society disavowed both the book and its author.[1] Then followed resignations of membership here and there, voices upraised to demand that Quakerism's orthodoxy should be proved, and finally—

[1] A. C. and R. H. Thomas, *A History of Friends in America* (American Church History Series, xii. 265).

though in 1836 another explicit declaration of faith in Christ was made by a Committee to which Forster, one of the most commanding Quaker figures, belonged [1]—a separate body, calling itself by the name of "Evangelical Friends," was formed in 1837. Even this was not quite all; for the Society, having once been roused to jealousy for its great idea, was on the watch; and even moderate assertions of evangelicalism and orthodoxy came to be looked upon with something of disfavour, as making too much of the question, and as having something more behind. Joseph John Gurney, for instance, who had been on the Committee which condemned Crewdson, himself fell under suspicion of being too Crewdson-like; and so further trouble was made.[2] "Intellectual confusion" is indeed an apt term for the situation as a whole.[3] In the end differences settled themselves and warring voices went down. But inevitably that decline in numbers which we already found noticeable in Quakerism [4] was speeded on; for the seceding members of the Society drifted for the most part into other religious communions—thus perhaps justifying the anxiety of the main body that insistence on orthodoxy might easily lead to forgetfulness of the main Quaker idea; though one hopes that as the passage to other communions was made something of the Quaker spirit was introduced into the Churches the former Quakers joined, and that so even seceding Quakerism may have been elsewhere a leaven working in unseen ways. It should be said, also, that Quakerism in its main body has not justified the fears with which the anxiously orthodox ones of those years were filled, but—while always preserving, and quite rightly so, its special emphasis—has held fast to the essentials of the Christian faith. Quaker numbers diminished; but

[1] *Memoir of William Forster*, edited by B. Seebohm, ii. 103 ff.

[2] A. C. and R. H. Thomas, as former note, p. 265. In America this led to the secession of those who stood by Gurney, John Wilbur leading them. It is as "Wilburites" that they were known.

[3] For the Hicksite controversy and its results, see *A History of Friends in America*, by A. C. and R. H. Thomas (American Church History Series, xii. 249 ff.). Although the book deals specially with America, it is useful also for parallel English Quakerism. Refer also to Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1880*, i. 356, 357, ii. 329, 330. There is a somewhat lengthy account of the matter in Bennett's *History of Dissenters 1808–1838*, pp. 361–372, but it is quite lacking in sympathy and in understanding of the main Quaker position.

[4] *Supra*, p. 347.

Quakerism was left—a small, but, as all who care for depth of religious experience will say, a precious and honourable company—to bear its special witness to mystical and yet evangelical Christianity in a world not too ready to give ear. For it is worth while to reassert that, notwithstanding the dislocations which occurred under the influence of the Hicksite fear, Quakerism had really taken the one step needed to bring it back to its first standing-ground. What has to be said, however, from our particular standpoint, is that both parties to the controversy show themselves to have experienced the pressure of the Nonconformist spirit upon them, and show also that they did not rightly understand. From the Society as a whole the Nonconformist spirit was demanding that the right balance between life and organisation (at least so far as a definite embodiment and formulation for thought of the life-process and its conditions mean organisation)—that right balance neglected too long—should, in order that the life itself might not fail, be found. In the very emergence of the Hicksite heresy, and in the fear which on this side it roused, the Nonconformist spirit found the occasion for putting forth its demand; and in the wayward movements made by both parties to the controversies whereof we have been speaking stands the evidence that the demand was heard. The repudiation of non-evangelicalism which was felt necessary by all at least proves all to have been stirred. Yet the tangled series of events which ensued—the disputation and recrimination, the fear on one side that repudiation of heterodoxy might be too sharply stressed, the fear on the other side that repudiation of heterodoxy might not go sufficiently far—shows that the real issue was not perceived, the real call not understood. The whole controversy was treated in view of the momentary situation alone; whereas there were far deeper things, things nearer the ultimate, at stake. Had this been perceived, then the real limits to which assertion of orthodoxy should go would have been seen by all alike, for the demand of the Nonconformist principle—recognised as such—would have fixed them; nor would the preservation of Quaker essentials have had any clash with the preservation of Quaker orthodoxy, since the Nonconformist spirit—recognised as such—would have deter-

mined at once the true relation between the two. But here, as elsewhere, the Nonconformist spirit was upon the field, unknown for what it was.

Among the Methodists we find the same forces as in the preceding period at work,[1] though operating now on a larger scale and from different starting-points. Now, as then, the run of Methodist history reveals how Methodism felt the pressure of the Nonconformist spirit imperious within, with its demand that all organisation shall be produced from within rather than imposed from without, while at the same time it reveals how the full significance of the demand was not understood, and how for the most part it was translated by those who became its agents into a demand for a more liberal application of the "democratic" idea. The Methodist secessions noticed in the previous section were followed, as the century passed on, by secession upon secession (often expulsion, rather than secession, would be the true word), each of them, whatever its immediate occasion might be, having behind it the same general spirit of revolt against authority pressed too far. Indeed, it is all to the praise of Methodist religion that the vitality it possessed refused, over and over again, to be restrained by the fetters with which Methodist organisation would have bound it; and one can only rejoice now—sad as many of the incidents marking the successive times of trouble certainly were—that so many Methodists had learnt Methodism's true lesson so well. To tell the story of each crisis in any detail would stretch our limits too far. Only the bare outlines can be drawn. The first Methodist difficulty of our period arose primarily upon a doctrinal rather than a constitutional point; for the "Arminian Methodists" were expelled from the Derby Society in 1831 (the "Derby Faith" was one of the names by which the little band came to be known) for holding views of faith which seemed to do too much honour to man and not enough to the grace of God.[2] It is somewhat

[1] *Supra*, pp. 325 ff.

[2] J. R. and A. E. Gregory, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 427; George Eayrs, in *ibid.* i. 520, 521. Herbert Spencer's father belonged to this body (*ibid.* i. 427), though Spencer himself (*Autobiography*, i. 82, 83) merely notes his connection with the Wesleyan Methodist body, and transfers him thence to the Quakers.

strange to find Methodism, Arminian as it had been from the beginning, disciplining some of its own children for excessive Arminianism; but so it fell out. The number of the expelled was but small—about six hundred; and whatever their heresies on the question of true faith may have been, these did not prove serious enough to prevent that junction with other seceding Methodists which we shall immediately have to note. But even in connection with the Arminian Methodists the matter of authority was raised. For they believed in the preaching ministry of women,[1] being fervent revivalists ready to employ every weapon they could grasp; and one is safe in saying that this, as much as the doctrinal question, lay behind their contumacy and behind authority's frown. A few years later a fresh crisis arose upon, or round, the establishment of a training institution for Methodist ministers; but in this, as in other cases, the dispute had not gone far before it became clear that the old grievance of the exclusive or excessive authority assumed by Conference was really to the front once more. One speaker complained at the Conference of 1834 that the scheme for a College had not been submitted to the circuits, and that the whole thing was an attempt to put into the hands of a few "power dangerous to the liberties of the preachers and the people"; and one address presented in connection with the dispute, going quite beyond the College controversy, enumerates a lengthy list of things that gall, and concludes by declaring that "the great, sole remedy for these evils is the immediate admission of the people to a share of power in the government of the Church."[2] So the one underlying idea found voice. Protests failed as they had failed before: the result, as before, duly emerged; and in August 1836 the "Wesleyan Methodist Association" was formed at Manchester, with Robert Eckett, a Methodist layman, as its guiding spirit, the new scheme providing for a due representation of laymen on its governing board.[3] And now began the series

[1] Elizabeth Evans, aunt to George Eliot, and prototype of Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, was for a time one of their preachers. She returned, however, to the Wesleyan Methodist fold (Cross, *George Eliot's Life*, ii. 53, 54; Mottram, *The True Story of George Eliot in relation to "Adam Bede,"* pp. 249-253).

[2] Redfern, *Modern Developments in Methodism*, pp. 118, 119.

[3] Eayrs, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 519.

of fresh combinations, of recombinations, among the different Methodist communities which had diverged from the original Methodist stock—that series which has not yet reached its last term. In the year the Wesleyan Methodist Association was formed, the Protestant Methodists of our previous section joined forces with it; and the following year the Arminian Methodists also came in.[1] This was the beginning of far greater things to be. The next item we have to notice, however, turns our thought to separation again—and to what are assuredly the tragic years of Methodism's life. The spirit of revolt had by no means been purged through the secessions and expulsions we have already chronicled: all over the original Methodist body discontent was alive; and the suppressed fever broke out at last in the "Fly-Sheets" of 1846 and 1848. These were anonymous publications, dealing pitilessly and sarcastically with the whole range of Methodist affairs. The Presidential office, Conference, and all the machinery, were duly scrutinised with critical eyes: such titles as *The Core and Cure of Misrule* were flaunted on the pamphlets' title-pages; and in some ways the "Fly-Sheets" recall the "Marprelate Tracts" of many centuries before. One cannot admire them; but by common consent the replies made to them from the official side were as bad as the "Fly-Sheets" themselves. With the republication of the pamphlets in book form the trouble came to a head; for the Conference embarked upon the almost incredibly provocative and foolish policy of demanding a signed disavowal of authorship from every preacher's hand. Upon refusal — and there were many refusals—expulsions followed at once, such good and valuable men as James Everett, strongly suspected of having been the unknown scribe, and William Griffith being forced to go: then, the authorities being in high mood, expulsion was visited upon all who expressed sympathy with those already expelled or desire for reform: then the attempted repression, as repression of the kind always does, kindled antagonistic tempers and increased what it was designed to subdue: expulsions led to enthusiastically protesting public meetings, and these to further expulsions of those who had taken part;

[1] Eayrs, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 520.

so that by the time the Conference of 1850 met fifty-seven thousand members had been lost to Wesleyan Methodism; and ten thousand or more dropped out in each succeeding year till a total of at least a hundred thousand had been reached. All efforts at mediation or reconciliation came to nothing, though many were made; and the question of future policy had to be decided by those who no longer possessed a spiritual home. Those who advocated and suffered for "reform" federated themselves even before the controversy was given up and even while they were still seeking to prevent an utter closing of the door against their returning feet. When the last hope had died, the "Wesleyan Reform Associations" became a Church. It has to be added, to make the statement complete, first that another step in the process of recombination was taken at the same time, inasmuch as the "Wesleyan Methodist Association"—which, as we have seen, had already absorbed the Protestant Methodists and the Arminian Methodists into its ranks—linked itself with the "Reformers" to make the "United Methodist Free Church"; and next, that some few of the "Reformers" preferred to stand aloof, and established themselves as "Wesleyan Reformers" upon their own separate ground.[1] The United Methodist Free Church started with a membership of no less than forty thousand; and, as need hardly be said, anything in the way of tyranny or excessive exercise of control was made impossible from the first. Indeed, fear of this was almost morbid for a time; though that phase passed over. With the birth of the United Methodist Free Church the list of Methodist separations fortunately ends; and equally fortunately, the list of Methodist unions and recombinations does not. The great union and combination, however, did not come till the twentieth century had passed seven milestones upon its way; but we must round off the tale by saying that in 1907 there was held the first Conference of the "United Methodist Church," for the construction of which the Methodist New Connexion, the Bible Christians, and the United Methodist Free Church had coalesced.[2] In some cases, it may be observed, the formal association of different Methodist

[1] Eayrs, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 527-539. [2] *Ibid.* i. 550, 551.

bodies, such as we have seen taking place, was rendered comparatively easy because each body lay geographically apart from the others, while at the same time no difference of principle obtained. Turning back for a moment, it must be recorded that the parent Methodist Church itself came at last—by a gradual process carried through from 1870 to 1878—to admit that principle of lay representation against which it had formerly made its bolts and bars so strong;[1] so that such a final flowing of all the Methodist rivers into one great Methodist sea—the fair hope and dream of not a few—may all the more easily by-and-by take place. Probably, also, by this admission of the principle the parent body may be taken as having acknowledged that its rebellious children were at any rate not wholly in the wrong. But the deeper inference, and the inference which in our context of thought we are more concerned to draw, is that through the entire Methodist body the Nonconformist spirit was asking for its own, and claiming that the Church it had created should live by the inspiration under whose unrecognised but real dynamic power it had been born. Although neither the original Church, nor the Churches formed one by one as division came, understood, the one in resisting, the other in advocating, the principle of "democracy applied to Church affairs," they were in reality dealing with—and both alike to some extent doing despite to—the mandate of the Nonconformist ideal that organisation must be made by life.

How the call of the ultimate Nonconformist ideal was heard, and yet only half-heard, through the present period appears freshly illustrated if we turn to the question concerning the laws and limits of doctrinal freedom, note its recurrence and the way in which it was met. It is only indirectly that we are concerned with doctrinal affairs; but at some points—certainly at one special point—the settlement of a Church's doctrinal position is affected, and ought to be actually controlled, by its conception of what a Church should be. Necessarily the Nonconformist Churches were affected, no less than the Established Church, by the thought-movements of the nineteenth century; and the general tendency towards freedom of discussion, the throwing of

[1] R. Waddy Moss, in *A New History of Methodism*, i. 442, 443.

beliefs long held inviolable into criticism's crucible, the growth of scientific conceptions of historical study and the application of these conceptions to the Bible, the battles waged round the miraculous idea—these and all the other deployings of the battalions of advancing thought—forced Nonconformity to reconsider its doctrinal position time and time again, indeed subjected Nonconformity's doctrinal formularies to a process of constant change not always recognised while it was going on, and coming to the surface every now and again in some crisis great or small. The ultimate difficulty always came to be this, How could sufficient liberty be given without giving too much? How could full justice be done to the claims of enquiry and to the modern spirit without admitting that *everything* was open, and that therefore the Church might possibly be left suspended in the air, a building with its foundation knocked away, in the end? We have seen how, as a matter of history, the propriety of making definite affirmations of belief —in that particular case affirmations of a definite belief in the special Deity of Christ—separated Presbyterians from Congregationalists in the Salters' Hall controversy of long ago.[1] The same general problem—how far must definite affirmations of doctrine go?—was at the back of the deliberations connected with the forming of the Congregational Union in 1832.[2] On at least one later occasion in the nineteenth century this problem became crucial within the Congregationalist lines; and the situation arising at and subsequent to the "Leicester Conference" of 1877 curiously reproduced that of the Presbyterian-Congregational dispute of 1719. The facts of 1877 may be very briefly set down. At the close of the Congregational Union's autumnal session in that year a number of ministers and laymen met in a "Conference" of those who desired (at least the conveners so desired, though among those present considerable differences of opinion were shown) to affirm the principle that "religious communion is not dependent on agreement in theological, critical, or historical opinion."[3] The principle is in

[1] *Supra*, pp. 193, 194.

[2] *Supra*, p. 362.

[3] For a report of the Conference see the *Christian World* for October 23, 1877; and Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 646-657.

itself of course quite sound; but equally of course somewhere or other the line must be drawn, and the exact implications of the principle need to be discerned when it is sought to apply the principle to a Christian Church, else one might be carried to the absurd position that in such a Church even a dogmatic atheist can find an appropriate and comfortable home. In the Leicester Conference the general principle just enunciated really meant for the conveners and their friends that Unitarian views need be no bar to ministry or fellowship in a Congregational Church. It is at this point that the situation of 1877 shows a change from that of 1719, as we noted when the latter was under our sight. There the issue had been merely one of subscribing to a "man-made creed," although, as after-events proved, the general objection really covered a specific objection (not recognised by those who felt it) to the particular doctrine over which the hour was hot. Here, at the later date, the specific but previously unrecognised objection had become explicit and avowed; and the main contention was that the thing made no essential difference to the Congregational Church-idea after all. The Congregational Union felt itself challenged, thrashed out the matter in full debate at its spring Assembly of 1878, and finally passed a resolution declaring that "Congregationalists have always regarded the acceptance of the Facts and Doctrines of the Evangelical Faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as an essential condition of Religious Communion in Congregational Churches, and that among these have always been included the Incarnation, the Atoning Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and Mediatorial Reign, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of men." For the time being the matter slept, but it woke later in the century when the saintly Thomas Lynch was charged with having put heresy into his "Rivulet" hymns;[1] it pressed once more in the "down-grade controversy" which Mr. Spurgeon initiated by charging the Baptist denomination with having forsaken the faith on which the Gospel was based; it appeared again in the "new theology"

[1] See *Memoir of Thomas T. Lynch*, edited by William White, chap. vii.

controversy in the twentieth century's early years;[1] and besides those more public appearances of the same fundamental problem which make theology for a little while the talk of the street, the problem is constantly intruding into narrower circles, into individual Churches, and into the columns of the religious press. It is no exaggeration to say that if Nonconformist Churches had realised and lived by the *full* Nonconformist ideal the problem would in some cases never have arisen at all, or, once it had arisen, would have been dealt with in other and more finally successful ways. For by the full Nonconformist ideal—unless this history has from the beginning been building on an erroneous view—a Church is made by the operation of a divine life actually communicated to the Christian disciple from the Christ who lives in him, which, whatever else may be said of it, or in what way soever the thing may be further defined, means that the Christ Who communicates the divine life to man must possess it in a very special fashion Himself. He is, in brief, not only example, inspirer, director of spiritual culture, revealer of truths and ideals, but actually *supernatural* life. To this much, at any rate, a Church which claims to live by the Nonconformist tradition and ideal is committed hard and fast. This is more than a doctrine in which a Church founded on the Nonconformist principle believes: it is involved in such a Church's constitutive idea; and you say this much even as the words "Nonconformist Church" pass your lips. Necessarily, therefore, any one who will not assent to a categorical statement of the supernaturalness of Christ cuts himself off from the true Nonconformist base. His refusal means that he does not recognise the life within himself as coming from such a source as that which the Nonconformist spirit claims and avows. Necessarily, also, since the Church, its ministry, its whole equipment and operation, do not for him come out of the working out of a supernatural life as the Nonconformist spirit believes in it (for, by the hypothesis, no such supernatural life is there), his whole conception of the Christian

[1] Details of these last two discussions can be found—if the finding of them be deemed necessary—in the religious papers of 1886 and 1887, and from 1907 onward.

life, his whole process of Christian culture, all the counsels by which he would exhort men to these as he conceives them, must run on quite other lines. Under these conditions severance, and not union, is the obviously rightful, even the obviously natural, thing. This does not mean—it must be said in passing—any un-Christianising of the man who takes the Unitarian road. He who believes in a Christ from Whom a directly-communicated life is to be derived must also believe—just because his Christ is so great—that no one can make any real and sincere approach to that Christ, be it made along what line it may, without deriving life in measure from the contact. Nor does all this mean that under the dominance of the full Nonconformist ideal an individual Unitarian can or ought to be refused membership in a Nonconformist Church if he on his side can there be at home and at peace.[1] But it does mean that under the dominance of the full Nonconformist ideal the dividing-line between a *Church* which owns a supernatural Christ-life as its energising power and a *Church* which does not—and consequently the dividing-line between the ministries of the two—needs to be sharply maintained. It means, indeed, that if ultimates be understood the line will in the nature of things draw itself. The two conceptions of the Christian life which follow from the two premises are so different that no single act of preaching, teaching, or sacramental ordinance can for both be the same. On the other hand, it means also that *only* at this point will the line be drawn and kept; for no other difference of opinion—for instance, on the evidence of this or that particular miracle, or for the date and authorship of this or that particular Bible book—means a change in the whole Church-conception and the whole process of spiritual culture which the Church is to teach and direct, such as difference of opinion on this fundamental question involves. And now—for although this has been a sort of doctrinal *excursus*, it is with the historic interest in view that it has been made—it can be seen how, if the true and full Nonconformist ideal had been recognised by the Nonconformist Churches, the discussions round the problem of creed

[1] This was substantially Dale's view (A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, pp. 341-345).

and of how far creed-changing might go would never have arisen or have been dealt with in other ways. Some would never have arisen; for it would have been clear that whoso is unconscious of a supernatural life derived from a specially divine Christ—or whoso would not formulate his spiritual experience in some such terms as these—must in the nature of things (for reasons of convenience, to put it at its lowest) set up his Church on a basis of its own. On the other hand, with the question once under debate, such formularies as those which we have just seen passed by the Congregational Union of 1878 would have taken a different shape, would have dealt with the one supreme point alone, and would have given explicit reasons for making it supreme. To use such phrases as "the Facts and Doctrines of the Evangelical Faith revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments," the "Mediatorial Reign" of Christ, even "the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of men," sounded too much like a challenge to all new interpretations and all criticism, and might easily make the other party suspicious lest under cover of declaring faith in Christ they were being committed to an abandonment of the mind's essential rights. For all these phrases, of course, possessed a significance hoary with age; and to thrust the phrases upon another person must be taken, in the absence of disavowal, as requiring acceptance of the hoary significance too. The use of them was certainly an indication that the ultimate Nonconformist ideal and its implications were not sufficiently clear in the minds of those who proposed them. They should have said both less and more. And to the other occasions when the general problem emerged similar considerations apply. The ultimate belief which could not be surrendered without destroying the basal Church-idea—and the fact that it could not be surrendered just *because* it would destroy the basal Church-idea—that at this point the question of liberty's bounds changed to the question whether the Church must destroy itself—these things were not sufficiently disentangled from the rest. All through, in fact, we are confronted by what in other connections we have seen—the Nonconformist spirit claiming all its rights, and the claim dimly discerned, yet not wholly understood. The instinct which

moved Congregationalism after the Leicester Conference was sound—just as the instinct which had moved the "subscribing assembly" of 1719 was sound, and as the instinct which moved in the later doctrinal discussions of the nineteenth century was sound—the instinct which felt that at some one particular line, separating faith in a Christ specially divine from faith in a Christ of other rank, change must suffer arrest unless the entire Church-conception of Nonconformity was to suffer change; and the instinct represented the push and the pull of the Nonconformist spirit itself, and a real, if somewhat blind, response. The whole Church-idea was gone, if liberty meant that this line could be overstepped. Through the doctrinal crises, through the theological conflicts, the ultimate Church-idea, as the Nonconformist spirit would have it framed, was calling for an opportunity of coming to the front; and instinct realised at least the importance of the voice that called. But the absence of clear reference to the bearing of the controversy upon the Church-idea—the mingling of subordinate considerations with the supreme—the confusion brought upon the whole thing, over and over again, by waging battle round the *general* question of creed and its possibilities of variation (as a result of which disputants have been put into false positions times without number)—all this indicates that the imperative instinct did not really understand itself, and that the call of the Nonconformist spirit was not known for what it was.

All this, with its constantly recurring echo of limitation, does not, of course, affect the fact that the religious life and work of the Churches with which we are dealing proceeded through the years with energy and success. Necessarily there were fluctuations, full tides and ebb, seventh waves and waves of lower pitch, summer and autumn seasons, golden hours and greyer, stretches of mountain travel and stretches along the humbler valley roads. But the sea never dried up, and the brighter times never failed to return, and progress never came wholly to arrest. From the religious level to which the Evangelical Revival had raised it, Nonconformity did not recede. Certainly, while the highest point above the average was very high indeed, the lowest point beneath it was never very low; and the average itself

was high. The succession of Nonconformity's prophets, priests, and kings was preserved; and if we name no names, it is only because all cannot be named, and to name a few would be to do injustice to the rest.[1] In all the departments of religious service which have at different times come under our eyes as Nonconformist history has passed on, the nineteenth century record tells of growth and advance. Ministerial education was more lavishly provided for and kept to higher standards, the older and smaller institutions giving place, by process of amalgamation, to institutions better equipped, one of them (Congregational) settling itself at Oxford as Mansfield College in 1889.[2] In the general religious enterprises whose beginning we noted in a previous section Nonconformists continued to take a prominent—in some cases indeed a principal—share; and when just after the middle of the century the Missionary and other Societies celebrated their "Jubilees,"[3] they had a long and honourable roll—telling of courage, consecration, generosity, even of martyrdom sometimes, at home and abroad—to present. Later on, the organisation of new forms of enterprise—such as great Missions in districts where ordinary religious work could not grip—showed that Nonconformity could adapt itself to changing times and changing needs. That numbers did not fail was amply proved when a census of 1851, taken under Government direction, found that the worshippers in the various Nonconformist Churches (though it must be remembered that Roman Catholics, as well as worshippers in the "particularist" Nonconformist denominations which we are for the moment leaving out of sight, were included in the "Nonconformist" returns) numbered nearly as many as those within the walls of the Established Church.[4] To

[1] See the relevant chapters in Skeats and Miall, as former note, or in Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, or in Waddington, *Congregational History*, iv. and v., for sketches of many of the leading men.

[2] See Stoughton, as former note, i. 239-243, 298, 299, ii. 286-288, 417, 418; Selbie, *Mansfield College: Its Origin and Opening*. The transfer of Cheshunt College to Cambridge took place in 1905.

[3] See Stoughton, as previous note, ii. chap. xx.

[4] Skeats and Miall, as former note, pp. 521-525. The figures were: Church of England, 3,773,474; other denominations, 3,487,558. No similar census has since been taken over the country as a whole, though in 1886 the *British Weekly*, and in 1902–1903 the *Daily News*, took one in London—the second being spread over many weeks. According to the 1886 census the Church of

Nonconformist religious journalism—represented chiefly by such powerful papers as the *Christian World* and the *British Weekly*, but also by the special denominational papers, of which almost every Nonconformist body possesses its own—at least a word of reference should be given. But all the things mentioned here can only, so to say, lay down the canvas on which the picture of Nonconformist religious life and work is to be drawn, and can by no means draw the picture itself. Or they can only indicate, and that incompletely, the columns into which many hundred details, gathered elsewhere, must be entered if Nonconformist activities are to be understood. In fact, any real description of Nonconformist religious life and work in the nineteenth century is impossible here. Only, it is worth while to realise at any rate that it *is* impossible; and in imagination to set nineteenth-century fulness against the small Nonconformist beginnings of long ago. And the Nonconformist historian, as he does this, must look back with still greater respect and honour to the men whose names he had to mention as the names of men despised when his story set out; and must do this not without some wistful hope that as they look down and contrast what is with what once was, they may even now be saying,

> The sunrise
> Well warranted our faith in this full noon.

It has been remarked that it is impossible to mention all of nineteenth-century Nonconformity's great names, and unwise therefore to mention any. But one name must be mentioned notwithstanding—for the reason that it is the name of a man in whom the Nonconformist spirit attained for once that fulness of expression for which we have seen it vainly anxious so often and so long. The mention of it is inevitable in any attempt to record how the Nonconformist spirit and ideal have fared, or to indicate how in the nineteenth century they touched the Nonconformist

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England had a majority in London; but in 1902–1903 the Nonconformists were ahead. But both had declined greatly relatively to population. Statistics of seating accommodation are of course always available. According to those of 1910, the Established Church provided 7,231,753 sittings, and the Nonconformists 8,788,285 in England and Wales.

Churches to call them back. Dale of Birmingham (1829–1895) stands out above all others as the man who knew and preached what Nonconformity in its ultimate essence stood for, and who contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Nonconformist pioneers. He had many other claims to recognition and honour; but from our present standpoint this is the one which concerns us most; though, it must also be confessed, it is the one which has counted least in the appreciation of many who have appreciated him with admiration warm and sincere. To Dale, Nonconformity stood for the positive idea that the Church was to be wholly made of men and women in whom Christ and the Christ-life were operative and energising, and that all the Church was and did—in its self-government, in the construction of all its apparatus of discipline and doctrine and its subsequent use of the apparatus so constructed, in its working upon and influence over the outside world—was to be the out-pressing of that inwardly operative and energising life. This was the Nonconformist ideal as Dale understood it; and this—since Congregationalism professed to stand for the Nonconformist ideal—was what Congregationalism ought to be. "When the Church reaches its ideal perfection, the acts of the Church are the acts of Christ, and what the Church binds on earth is bound in Heaven, and what it looses on earth is loosed in Heaven."[1] "This implies a union of the most intimate kind between the Church and Christ, in whom the Church is one with God."[2] "Those who have no faith in Christ, no love for Him, to whom He is not the Son of God and the Saviour of the World, cannot be gathered together in His name. If such persons are physically present in an assembly of the Church, they are spiritually apart from the Church as they are spiritually apart from Christ. To whatever extent their judgment and action control the Church, to that same extent the Church is brought under the power of an influence which divides the members of the Church both from Christ and from each other; and they prevent the Church from being gathered together

[1] *Manual of Congregational Principles*, p. 36; see also the Introduction to the *Proceedings of the International Congregational Council 1891*, p. 38.

[2] *Manual of Congregational Principles*, p. 42.

in His name."[1] "Christ is the true Lord of the Church, and His authority is to be exerted through the concurrent action of all the members of the Church, because, according to the Christian ideal, all the members of the Church are one with Him. It is not only the officers of the Church that are in Him, but the commonalty of the Church; and therefore it is through the commonalty of the Church, as well as its officers, that He maintains His authority and gives effect to His will. The great contention of Congregationalism is not that every Christian man has a *right* to share in the government of the Church, but that every Christian man is directly *responsible* to Christ for securing in the discipline, doctrine, and worship of the Church the supremacy of its Divine Founder and Lord. This responsibility rests upon the wonderful union between Christ and all who are restored to God through Him. He is the life of their life. He reveals Himself through them. The right of all Church members to take part in the government is an inference; for they cannot discharge their responsibility unless the right is conceded."[2] All this—and quotation might be indefinitely extended[3]—was far enough from that poor conception of the Nonconformist and Congregational principle which Dale found entertained all around him; far enough, certainly, from that idea of Nonconformity being "democracy applied to Church affairs" which, as we have seen, had for so many years been coming more and more in vogue. Dale's biographer tells us how Dale sorrowed because hardly any cared for these things, and because "among those who gave any thought at all to the matter not a few regarded the Congregational system as embodying the democratic principle in its application to Church government, and defended it on these lines."[4] So too when Dale was in Australia, "wherever he went he preached Congregationalism—not the bastard Congregationalism that regards itself as a democratic form of Church polity, and teaches the people

[1] *Manual of Congregational Principles*, pp. 42, 43.

[2] *Ibid.* pp. 62, 63.

[3] Consult Dale's essay on "The Idea of the Church in Relation to Modern Congregationalism" in *Ecclesia: A Series of Essays on Theological and Ecclesiastical Questions* (second series), edited by Reynolds.

[4] A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, pp. 243, 244.

that they have a right to govern the Church as they please, but the Congregationalism of the heroic age which makes the people responsible for finding the mind of Christ as to the way in which His Church should be governed."[1] In brief, all Dale's teaching on the topic of the Church was this—that organisation was to be made by life, and that only as this held good could organisation react upon life again. It is no extravagance to say that if one sets one's hand imaginatively upon Wiclif's head, and then brings the hand down the years along the ranks of those by whom the Nonconformist principle has been expounded, it is only when the hand comes to Dale that it rests again upon a head quite as high. But it does so there. And so far as Dale himself is concerned, it may be said that in his day Wiclif's great day dawned again. In him, at least, the Nonconformist spirit achieved one of its shining hours. In him, at least, the nineteenth century heard the Nonconformist spirit's ultimate call. But Nonconformity, though it honoured the man, hardly grasped the meaning of what he had to tell it concerning itself and the things which belonged unto its peace. And it is one of the puzzles and regrets with which a study of Nonconformist history fills the mind that the teaching on this point—the central one as he made it—of a man whom Nonconformity professes to revere so deeply should count for so little as it does to-day.

So far, then, we have seen that the call of the ultimate Nonconformist ideal came faintly to the Nonconformist Churches which had started their career under the inspiration of that ideal long before, but that at any rate it came. The sense that there *was* an ultimate ideal afar off intruded now and then, here and there—to become explicit and articulate at least once when Dale so splendidly reaffirmed the old Nonconformist Church-idea—and gave rise to certain movements of development and reconstruction within the Nonconformist Churches themselves, even though those movements were deflected somewhat from their proper line, or were stopped short before producing their full effect, because the real source of their prompting went undis-

[1] A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, p. 564.

cerned. And it has to be repeated now that among the obstacles to discernment, among the influences which clouded the ultimate sun even while it was striving to break through, were the obstacles and influences of which the previous section took account. There was first of all the fact that the homeward steps which Nonconformity was taking did not *automatically* suggest the whole road or the homeward goal. And there was the other fact that mistaken interpretations of Nonconformist principle were likely to be accentuated or confirmed by the presence of "particularist Nonconformity" upon the field. For the first fact the mere mention may suffice. For the full appreciation of the second, a glance must be taken at particularist Nonconformity as it lived and moved and grew during the nineteenth century's passing years.

How a touch of particularism had for long rested upon the Baptists—in respect of hyper-Calvinistic insistence for one thing, in respect of the "open *versus* close Communion" controversy for another—will be easily recalled. It is with a glance toward this side of things—not, of course, that the Baptists are in themselves an instance of particularist Nonconformity, but rather that they afford an instance of a certain particularism in a denomination not esentially particularist—that we may begin. Fortunately, the history of this last stage has to record that in the first respect the particularist touch has been lifted so far as to permit of an amalgamation of the General Baptist New Connexion with the Calvinistic Baptists, an amalgamation consummated in 1891. Of course, the special doctrines of "high Calvinism" slackened their grip upon all the Churches which held them, not upon the Calvinistic Baptists alone, as time went on. The question whether this process may not easily go too far is a theological one, and lies outside our range: it may suffice to recall the distinction made once before when the matter came up—the distinction between an abandonment of Calvinism which is a mere drifting away from it, a mere tendency to look upon the entire process of salvation as a smaller thing than Calvinism makes it, and a modification of it which is reached in the course of a positive reconstruction of theological thought. In the first un-

doubted dangers lie. Through the second, the sense of the greatness of God and of the supreme importance of His action in saving grace—which is Calvinism's central motive, as distinguished from its formal statement—may be adequately preserved.[1] Probably a verdict upon the theological movement of the nineteenth century would declare that while at first the abandonment of "high Calvinism" represented a systematic and reasoned modification in theological thought, the process of mere drifting—following upon or concurrent with a tendency to emphasise the divineness of man rather than the greatness of God—subsequently set in. However that may be, the earlier Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, whether any sufficient substitute were adopted for it or not, became impossible to practically all. The line of distinction between the General Baptist New Connexion and the Calvinistic Baptists—the modified predestination doctrine of the second meeting, the doctrine of "election according to foreknowledge" on which, as we have seen, the Baptist New Connexion was built[2]—grew fainter: on the other hand, the hesitancy of the New Connexion to utter the orthodox formula upon the supreme doctrine of Christ's special Deity had passed away; and the growing consciousness that an approximation was automatically fulfilling itself led to the union of the two denominations in the end.[3] So the General Baptist New Connexion closed its honourable and useful career of something more than a hundred years, not having borne its witness in vain in its separateness, and yet finding larger possibilities opening before it when its separateness was lost. In respect of the other matter in which the particularist touch had been shown, no such complete lifting of it has to be recorded. The controversy as to open or close Communion—whether or not those whom Baptist doctrine views as not truly baptized might be admitted to the Sacramental board—waxed loud at times, and for that matter is agitated yet. Or, if the actual sound of the controversy is seldom heard, both sides

[1] See on this Forsyth, *Faith, Freedom, and the Future*, pp. 262-266.

[2] *Supra*, p. 253.

[3] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, ii. 418, 419 (for earlier stages of the uniting process); also article "Baptists" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

are represented still within the Baptist lines. In 1860 the dispute became so keen in connection with St. Mary's Baptist Church at Norwich that the aid of the law had to be called in; and the final judgment, it is interesting to recall, declared that where the trust-deed was so strict as to prevent non-Baptists from communicating at the regular ordinance, a separate Communion Service might be instituted for them if the Church so desired.[1] That the majority of Baptist Churches in the present day keep open places at their Sacramental service for others than Baptists is an undoubted fact over which Christian charity must rejoice. But upon some Churches of the body, at any rate, the particularist touch remains. Even "seventh-day Baptists"—that curious manifestation of particularism which has confronted us once or twice as the years have gone by—are still in our midst.[2]

It is, however, the actually particularist Churches, not those which show merely a particularist touch, that are of most importance under our immediate head; and to these we must turn. The Unitarians—emphatically particularist now—may come first. The Unitarians—the old Presbyterians—had become practically particularist (although it had been from a much broader basis, a basis implying a real Church-ideal, albeit a Conformist one, that they had started) through making the Unitarian watchword the one they ceaselessly cried. And it was in this aspect they maintained their place upon the field. From time to time there appeared among them men who chafed against the small work which, so long as they stood for a mere dogmatic Unitarianism, was all that they were able to perform, and who prophesied that the particularism of Unitarianism would by-and-by prove its undoing and drive it to its death. J. J. Tayler, John Hamilton Thom, and above all James Martineau, were prominent among those who took this line; and the last-named, one of the choicest spirits of the century or of all centuries, made effort upon effort, though little else than disappointment was his reward, to induce in his fellow-Unitarians a longing for an outlook less cramped than the

[1] See *supra*, p. 133 note.

[2] For a Church of this kind in the nineteenth century, see Stoughton, as former note, i. 289.

one to which they clung. Though a convinced Unitarian himself, he held that to designate a religious body by the name of a single doctrine, or by a name which suggested that it existed for nothing else but a protest against the dominant theology, was to abandon everything that could call a real and living Church into existence; and it was upon the general foundation of love to Christ—however doctrine about Christ might be formulated—that his ideal Church was to be set up.[1] Martineau's broad-Churchism must, for reasons set out before,[2] have proved as futile and unenduring as broad-Churchism of the kind must always prove; but one must honour the spirit which caused him to chafe against the particularism of those who in their Unitarianism, but in little else, were his comrades; and one must take it as significant that out of the midst of Unitarianism itself a protest so trenchant and yet so persuasive should have emerged. But it failed, and Unitarianism was content to bear its own little witness, to be intellectual rather than spiritual, a propaganda addressed to the mind rather than to the soul, a lecture-course rather than a religion, and to shade its eyes so heavily that while it saw one thing all the more clearly, it saw other things not at all. It has had all through the period a few men on whom something of Martineau's spirit has rested; but it cannot be said that they have been either numerous or strong enough to impress their own characteristics upon the Unitarian body as a whole: they have come and gone, but have been in Unitarianism rather than of it; and after their going the denomination has been much what it was before. As a distinctively spiritual force, its achievement was and is but small. It has simply borne its testimony to its one particularist idea. Over and above the brief summary of the Unitarian position now laid down, we may, while the Unitarians are in our view, pick up one or two threads of Unitarian history which we left lying loose upon the ground before. We saw how friction between Congregationalists

[1] See the many relevant passages in *Life and Letters of James Martineau*, by Drummond and Upton, particularly perhaps the account of Martineau's abortive attempt at establishing a "Free Christian Union" (i. 415-436).

[2] *Supra*, pp. 375, 376.

and their old allies was growing; and we saw that both in regard to a Wolverhampton Church and in regard to Lady Hewley's Trust litigation, or movements towards litigation, had been begun.[1] The suit concerning Lady Hewley's Trust actually commenced—Dr. Bennett's enquiries being complete—in 1830; but the long argument went on for no less than twelve years, the House of Lords delivering in 1842 the final judgment, which decided that the old Presbyterians were in the wrong.[2] It was for the benefit of orthodox Presbyterians and of other orthodox denominations that Lady Hewley had opened the fountain of her benevolence, and the Unitarians of the nineteenth century had no title to partake. Meanwhile, the Wolverhampton Church case had been roused from its sleep in the Chancery Court; but the decision was postponed till judgment in the case of the Trust should have been given. Indeed, judgment in the case of the Trust necessarily determined judgment in the case of buildings, as the essential elements of the problem were the same in both. The Unitarians had to surrender the Wolverhampton Church;[3] but worse than this, the decision meant that there was hardly a Church in their possession anywhere which they might not receive notice to quit. In equity, however, whatever the existing law might say, this would have been the extremity of injustice; and Sir Robert Peel, approached by the Unitarian Presbyterians, consented to introduce into Parliament a Bill —the "Dissenters' Chapels Bill" was its usual name—legalising the possession of places of worship if such had been occupied by one congregation for twenty-five years. Scarcely any one to-day would question the essential justice of such an enactment; but it is a blot upon nineteenth century Nonconformists that they fought Sir Robert Peel's measure with all their strength. The parliamentary debate brought out speeches on the affirmative side from Macaulay and Gladstone—the former vehemently and justly reproaching the orthodox Nonconformists for lack of that charity which they always claimed for themselves. "When I hear a cry for

[1] *Supra*, p. 312.
[2] James, *History of Litigation and Legislation, etc.*, pp. 324-367.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 225, 226.

what is nothing less than persecution set up by men who have been over and over again within my own memory forced to invoke in their own defence the principles of toleration, I cannot but feel astonishment mingled with indignation." [1] Gladstone supported the Bill on the rather curious ground, not that the Unitarians had acquired a moral right to be left alone, but that they were "the true lawful holders, because though they did not agree with the puritan opinions they adhered firmly to the puritan principle, which was that scripture was the rule without any binding interpretation, and that each man, or body, or generation must interpret for himself." [2] What some of the old Puritans would have said to this representation of their supposed principles may easily be guessed. But whatever the grounds on which support was given, powerful advocacy of the Bill carried it through. The Unitarians stood firm in their lot at the end of the days. To make the list of historical items in connection with them complete, it must be said that during the litigation over Lady Hewley's Trust the Unitarians withdrew (in 1836) from the Board of the "Three Denominations," [3] themselves taking the initiative—although as early as 1829 a suggestion of severance had come from the Congregational side—and established a "Presbyterian Board" of their own, to which was accorded in its turn the right of access to the throne which the older Board had always possessed.[4] Through all these things the crisis which had threatened the very existence of Unitarianism for a while passed over; and it remained secure in particularist Nonconformity's ranks.

Of the other particularist Churches we have already noticed there is not much to say except that they continued to run their course. We can only imagine Moravians, Sandemanians, Swedenborgians, and even Muggletonians, carrying on each the propagation of its own views; though it must not be taken that this grouping of them together is done for any other reason than that of convenience, or that it implies any similarity either in them or in the estimates

[1] Macaulay, *Works* (ed. Lady Trevelyan), viii. 281.
[2] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, i. 322.
[3] *Supra*, p. 189.
[4] Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, ii. 121-123.

of their worth. To the Moravians, indeed, the grouping would, without such a disclaimer, be distinctly unfair. Particularist as we have been forced to hold them, it remains true that they stand out from all other particularist Churches for fine and noble qualities, and, as must once more be said, for ardent missionary zeal. But of them, as of most others, there is little that calls for record in these years. Only Plymouth Brethrenism made history; and the history it made was of no edifying kind. We have seen the two centres of Brethrenism established at Dublin and Plymouth, and noted how Newton was in the second place the congregation's guide. His fellowship at Oxford removed him to the University for certain limited periods; but whenever he could be at Plymouth, he was faithful to his place and work there. Unfortunately, differences of opinion between Newton and Darby quickly showed themselves; and the quarrel—for it was nothing less, though Newton displayed a temper far more gracious than that by which the masterful Darby was mastered—ran like leaping fire from stage to stage. It is scarcely necessary here to go into details. The historian of Plymouth Brethrenism tells us that for years a dispute had been going on as to "the relation of the Christian Church to the great Tribulation"—which means that while both parties believed in an inevitable great persecution just before the second coming of Christ in glory, Newton held that the Christians living on the earth would experience the persecution's sharpness, Darby, on the other hand, considering that the entire Church would be rapt away into heaven immediately before Christ's appearance, and that the victims of the tribulation would be "another semi-Christian or semi-Jewish body who will be called out as witnesses to God before the end of the age."[1] To such confusions and controversies had the method of literal Scripture interpretation led. Incredible as it may appear, it was from this beginning that there started the series of events which culminated in Darby's secession from Newton's meeting in 1845. Darby, after a journey on the Continent, had come to Plymouth, and had come, as it seemed, only to carry on a seven-months' quarrel—from March to October—and to break

[1] Neatby, *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 105.

up the fellowship in the end. Later on, Newton was charged with adopting false views as to the Person of Christ—the incriminated doctrine being one to the effect that Christ had come under the "federal headship of Adam," and accordingly endured, under the general curse, sufferings distinct from those by which He wrought atonement for the world—and thereupon followed a sharper conflict than the one before.[1] Charges of misrepresentation, of dishonesty, of wilful false reporting, filled the air: meetings of Brethren in various places (there were now many) solemnly disowned communion with others and were disowned in their turn; and a curious illustration was afforded of that undivided Church with which Brethrenism's programme had begun. Nor was this all. Darby, determined to be dictator with plenary powers, not only excommunicated all who shared Newton's views, but demanded that all who held any sort of fellowship with the heretics—not only Church-fellowship, but ordinary social intercourse—should be excommunicated too; as a result of which drastic decree the saintly George Müller of Bristol—philanthropist in the holy service of the children—had to quit the Darbyite ranks.[2] Ever since then the two main divisions of the Brethren—the "Exclusives" as the Darby section is called, the "Open Brethren" as Newton's followers were termed from the first—have kept apart; but over and above this, the "Exclusive" section has justified its name by piling exclusion on exclusion, till it is practically impossible to tell the number of subsidiary sections into which it has split up by to-day.[3] It is a miserable story, and may well stand as an object-lesson in the evils to which particularism may readily give rise. A number of small sects, each contending for its own particular shibboleth, each claiming to be the specially called and chosen of God, is what Brethrenism—having set out to restore the primitive Christianity of the apostolic age—has in the latter days become.

Of new particularist religious associations a few must at least be named. The Catholic Apostolic Church was organised in 1832.[4] It was based upon the idea that the

[1] Neatby, *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, chap. vii.
[2] Neatby, as previous note, chap. viii. [3] *Ibid.* chaps. ix., xiv., xv.
[4] See Stoughton, *History of Religion in England 1800–1850*, i. chap. 16. Stoughton was himself present at one of the "manifestations" at Regent's Square.

miraculous gifts of the apostolic age are still within the Church's reach; and this idea had itself been born from the occurrence of what was called "speaking with tongues" under the ministry of Edward Irving at Regent's Square Scotch Presbyterian Church. The actual first happening of these "manifestations" was among some Presbyterians on the Clyde; but Irving allowed himself to be persuaded that he had a special call in this matter, and that under his influence a special baptism of miraculous power, for healing purposes among others, might be secured. The "speaking with tongues," it may be said, sometimes consisted of loud but comprehensible ejaculations, sometimes of mere unintelligible sounds. Irving himself was expelled from the Presbyterian Church—on grounds of heresy, however, not in connection with the "manifestations"—and got together (in Newman Street, Oxford Street) a congregation of those who accepted his strange ideas.[1] The ministry of the Catholic Apostolic Church has four orders—the apostle who can confer the Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands, the prophet who expounds prophecy and symbols, the evangelist who preaches to the world at large, and the pastor whose function is what his name implies, the watching over the sheep of the flock. But all this is built round the central idea that what was possible in apostolic times is possible still, and that if only the Church were rightly governed from top to bottom and in every particular, all the phenomena of the earliest Christian years would be repeated upon our earth again.

[1] "For many months he has been puddling and muddling in the midst of certain insane jargonings of hysterical women, and crack-brained enthusiasts, who start up from time to time in public companies, and utter confused stuff, mostly 'Ohs' and 'Ahs,' and absurd interjections about the 'body of Jesus'; they also pretend to work miracles, and have raised more than one weak bedrid woman, and cured people of 'nerves,' or as they themselves say, 'cast devils out of them.' All which poor Irving is pleased to consider as the 'work of the Spirit,' and to janner about at great length as making *his* Church the peculiarly blessed of Heaven, and equal to or greater than the primitive one at Corinth. This, greatly to my sorrow, and that of many, has gone on privately a good while, with increasing vigour; but last Sabbath it burst out publicly in the open Church; for one of the 'Prophetesses,' a woman on the verge of derangement, started up in the time of worship, and began to speak with tongues, and as the thing was encouraged by Irving, there were some three or four fresh hands who started up in the evening sermon and began their ragings; whereupon the whole congregation got into foul uproar, some groaning, some laughing, some shrieking, not a few falling into swoons: more like a Bedlam than a Christian Church."—Carlyle to his mother. Froude's *Carlyle's Early Life*, ii. 218, 219.

The Christadelphians owe their existence to a man named John Thomas (1805–1871), who left his home in England and at first identified himself with the "Campbellites," an American sect.[1] From them, however, he separated at last, finding their tenets as false as those of all the rest of the Churches, orthodox and otherwise, and elaborated a scheme of ideas of his own. He came back to visit Britain in 1848, 1862, and 1869, and on each occasion made new proselytes to his faith. The Christadelphian system starts from the Abrahamic and prophetic covenants (which did not merely look on to the coming of Christ, but embraced all the Christian ages in their view) and expects a fulfilment of them in the ultimate setting-up of a theocracy ruled from Jerusalem. Incidentally, it holds the theory of "conditional immortality"—that is, the theory that only true Christians are destined to live for ever, annihilation being the portion reserved for all the rest. But the conceptions of a coming fulfilment of the old covenants in and for the saved, and of an impending theocratic kingdom upon earth ushered in by a visible return of Christ to the world, are the pivots of the scheme. The biographer of Thomas, it may be worth while to note, confesses that if Christ had not come by 1910, it would have been proved that Thomas was at any rate to some extent astray.[2] The name of the body was hit upon by Thomas himself hurriedly and at random, since his followers, desiring to escape from military service in the States at the time of the Civil War, had to register themselves under a distinctive title. "This, like every other incident in the Doctor's life, was due to the pressure of circumstances, not to the Doctor's initiative," his biographer observes, as though giving a testimonial that should put all enquiries to rest.[3] It is at Birmingham that the headquarters of the British Christadelphians are fixed.

Two non-established episcopal bodies demand a word.[4] The Free Church of England arose in 1844 in opposition to the Tractarian movement, is episcopal in its government,

[1] See *Dr. Thomas, his Life and Work*, by R. Roberts. At pp. 309-313 a list of the principal Christadelphian doctrines is given.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 315. [3] *Ibid.* p. 282.

[4] For these, see brief accounts in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.*

and claims—while maintaining communion with all evangelical Churches—to be really in fellowship with the Established Church still. Doctrinally, it is certainly at one with the evangelical or Low-Church section of the Establishment; but the Establishment itself would assuredly not admit the claim to oneness with it which the Free Church of England makes. It is as a protest against High Churchism and all its works that the body maintains itself; and separate as it is from the Church of England, it shuts its eyes to the fact. The Reformed Episcopal Church—formed in America in 1873, introduced into this country in 1877—is similarly protesting in its fundamental idea. It is, however, distinguished from the Free Church of England in that it views episcopacy as an office, not an order, and the Bishop is merely first among equals, claiming neither the possession nor the power of imparting any special grace. It is, as would be expected from this, strongly anti-sacramentarian: indeed, its chief mission is to repudiate certain "Romeward positions," and its chief message is that there are certain things which it does *not* believe. But neither the Free Church of England nor the Reformed Episcopal Church have enrolled any large following. Besides being particularist, they are to so great an extent *negatively* particularist that their call cannot very forcibly constrain, and their testimony cannot satisfy, the hungry hearts of men.

To the revival of Presbyterianism—orthodox Presbyterianism—in England a few words must be given. Particularist the new Presbyterian Church cannot be called; for it stands for a very definite Church-ideal, and for the entire system of doctrine and discipline which its name suggests. And yet it cannot be classified as either Conformist or Nonconformist. The present Presbyterian Church of England has come into being through the union of two branches of Scotch Presbyterianism domiciled this side of the border. Of Scotch Presbyterianism in England we have already heard:[1] we have also observed that when Presbyterianism in England lapsed into Socinianism, a few Churches in the north of the country remained true to the orthodox faith; and these few associated themselves with their brethren in

[1] *Supra*, p. 196.

Scotland, some of them with the "United Presbyterian Church," others with the Scotch Establishment. When Scotch Presbyterianism was further rent by the great Free Church secession of 1843, some of the southern Churches transferred themselves to fellowship—though not to actual and formal union—with the newly-formed "Free Church" of the north, under the title of the "Presbyterian Church in England." Thus there were three orthodox Presbyterian bodies in our midst.[1] But most of the differences which were still living and strong in Scotland had little meaning here; and as this came to be more and more realised, the idea of union between the two southern Churches connected with the two non-established Churches of the north took hold. The Churches connected with the Scotch Establishment preferred to remain as they were; but the year 1876 saw the "Presbyterian Church of England" formed.[2] (The "Presbyterian Church *in* England," it will be remembered, was the name of one of the Churches now linked up.) The Church is large and prosperous, honoured for both its learning and its work; and its representatives, it may be incidentally mentioned, have taken the place of the English Presbyterians upon the original "Three Denominations" Board. But, as was just now said, it is difficult to classify it as either Conformist or Nonconformist. It must be remembered that while the United Presbyterian Church, with which one of the constituent Churches of the new body was formerly linked, was hostile to the idea of Establishment, the Free Church—the associate of the other constituent—was not; nor, for that matter, does hostility to the Establishment idea necessarily imply that the true Nonconformist spirit's call has been heard. On the other hand, the claim of exclusive divine right is seldom made for the Presbyterian polity now, and is certainly not made officially by the English Presbyterian Church. In fact, owing to the peculiar circumstances of the Church's origin and continued life, both the Conformist and the Nonconformist ideas may quite well be represented in the ranks of its members, and probably are; though since

[1] M'Crie, *Annals of English Presbytery*, pp. 314-317.

[2] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 714, 715; Drysdale, *History of the Presbyterians in England*, pp. 625-628.

it is from a definite conception of polity that the Church description or definition starts, and since that polity's essential superiority is more or less asserted, the tendency would seem to be towards the Conformist side. But however that may be, by the very name it bears it necessarily adds another to the already existing instances of "definition by difference," and so helps to stamp that method of definition as accepted and right. Certainly the older Nonconformist Churches—having already come to conceive of themselves as exemplifying the "democratic idea applied to Church government and affairs"—would look still more like exemplars of that idea, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others, with the new Presbyterianism at their side.

Historian and reader alike must grow weary of a catalogue of Churches and the dividing lines between them. Yet all this gives no countenance to the oft-repeated sneer that Nonconformity means endless multiplication of sects. Particularist Churches, be it always remembered, are *not* Nonconformist except by the mere accident of their severance from an Established Church. They are Conformist, and Conformist to the extreme. And they are set in the momentary limelight here to show how they helped to make the task of the true Nonconformist spirit harder as that spirit sought to recall its old friends and servants to their ancient ground. As in the previous period particularist Nonconformity helped to prevent the inheritors of the great Nonconformist past from realising that there was an ultimate goal to their homeward journey whereof they had no glimpse, so in this final period of our survey it helped to prevent the inheritors of the great Nonconformist past—even though they occasionally realised that there *was* such a goal—from passing out of vague realisation to determined and straightforward quest.

Section 3

The Extension of Freedom

Authorities.—The books spoken of in connection with the previous section bear also upon the matter of this; and the remark as to consulting the religious newspapers and magazines still holds good. As, however, this section views Nonconformity in political and State relations, general *Histories* must also be

studied in order to make understanding complete. Among these may be named Sir Spencer Walpole's *History of England from the Conclusion of the Great War* —which comes down to 1854—and its successor by the same author, *The History of Twenty-five Years*; Bright's *History of England*; and for the middle and later parts of the period covered, Justin M'Carthy's *History of Our Own Times* and Herbert Paul's *History of Modern England*, this last reaching to 1895. Also, volumes 11 and 12 of *The Political History of England*, the first (1801–1837) by G. C. Brodrick and J. K. Fotheringham, and the second (1837–1901) by Sidney J. Low and L. C. Sanders, should be added to the list. The genuinely critical and judicial history of the nineteenth century, however, has still to be waited for. May's *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860* is indispensable up to its time-limit. Biographies of statesmen, such as Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, G. B. Smith's *Life of John Bright*, and Wemyss Reid's *Life of W. E. Forster*, to mention only three, are of incalculable value.

Our final look at that Nonconformity whose fortunes we have been following so long has to watch Nonconformity as through the greater part of the nineteenth century—from 1828 to the close—it fought gallantly to obtain release from the disabilities which still weighed it down. The fight was a gallant one indeed, heavy in the demands it made, heroic in the fashion wherein those demands were met, brilliant on the whole in its success. Nothing that is here said as to Nonconformity's imperfect return upon its own primary ideal is to be taken as questioning that. As to courage shown and sacrifices endured in religious freedom's cause the century must always stand out as one to which Nonconformity can look back with a glow of justifiable pride.

That Nonconformity should press on to greater triumphs after the Test and Corporation Acts had been swept away was only in the nature of things, and was also in the line of fulfilling that new reading of its mission and its destiny which Nonconformity had begun. The task of striving towards perfect religious liberty was, we saw, the task which Nonconformity found devolving upon it when it reached its "second platform of return"—religious revival having baptized it upon the first—on its way backward, upward, and home. And much remained to be done before perfect religious liberty could be declared won. Direct penalties had passed away with the passing of the Test and Corporation Acts. But indirect penalties remained to a by no means insignificant total count. Nonconformity no longer groaned under measures designed to penalise it because it was what it was; but in many departments of life and work it found

itself confronted by laws and regulations which had been framed upon the assumption that the Established Church was the one and only Church in the realm, and which upon that assumption imposed conditions barring Nonconformists away. In fact, it may be said that from the moment when the coming of a Nonconformist child raised the matter of registering its birth up to the moment when death thrust forward the question of a Nonconformist grave, and at many of the critical moments between, those moments for instance when educational decisions had to be made or wedded life to be begun, Nonconformity found the Church in a position of privilege that galled, and itself, correlatively, thrust out into the cold. And of course the very existence of an Established Church—the selection by the State of one Church for national recognition and national support, with all the *prestige* therein involved—was in itself a violation of liberty's idea. (That it was something worse than this, and that it should have been recognised as something worse, will presently be noted. But this much at least it was.) It was not to be expected that Nonconformity—even though the supreme reasons for discontent were only feebly operative—should remain satisfied with things as they were. Toleration, indeed, was seen to be an insufficient boon so soon as it had been won. The victorious struggle for perfect toleration must bring a struggle for "equality" in its train. Nonconformists, whether consciously or instinctively, realised the truth of what Mirabeau had said long ago, "The word toleration seems to me in a certain sense tyrannical, since the authority which tolerates could also not tolerate."[1] Not toleration, but equality, was henceforward to be the word.

But there were higher and lower reasons for sounding it. In the nature of the Nonconformist ideal itself the loftier reasons lay; for, necessarily, the penalising of any man in any sphere, be the penalising direct or indirect, for religious belief is a denial that inner spiritual life has a right to work itself out as it will; and in what way the Nonconformist spirit discountenances the State establishment of religion was pointed out before our historical study began.[2] The lower

[1] Ruffini, *Religious Liberty* (trans. J. P. Heyes), p. 9.
[2] Vol. I. pp. 10-13.

reasons—by which is not meant that they are weaker within their own sphere, but merely that it *is* to a different sphere, and a sphere lower in the moral scale, that they belong—are the reasons which the general spirit of liberality, as it takes its secular path, would gradually come to discern. And if we enquire, as we have been enquiring all through, concerning the relation of Nonconformity to its own ideal, it has to be said that for the most part it was the lower reasons, not the higher, which swayed Nonconformity to its nineteenth century fight. "For the most part"—is advisedly said. For every now and again there appeared a sign—sometimes in the undertaking by Nonconformity or by some of its prominent representatives of an enterprise which the general spirit of liberality was not sufficiently advanced to adopt, sometimes in dissatisfaction with what Nonconformity, in alliance with the general spirit of liberality, accepted as liquidation of its claims — every now and again there appeared a sign that Nonconformity was hearing a far-off call, and knew itself less faithful than it ought to be. But inasmuch as the hours of great enterprise were but infrequent, and inasmuch as dissatisfaction was less acute than was meet, one is driven back upon the statement that for the most part it was the lower reasons for action which impelled Nonconformity most. What we have is this, in brief —that where disability, immediately felt and recognised as such, disability bringing actual loss and pain, was concerned, Nonconformity was pushful, the general spirit of liberality being ready to aid it in respect of such things as these; while when it was a matter of driving the Nonconformist principle to its ultimate assertions, claims, and consequences, and (which is the same thing) a matter with which the general spirit of liberality did not feel itself to be so obviously and immediately concerned, Nonconformity was far less keen, and sometimes wholly inert. The difficulty with which living interest in the disestablishment cause was kept alive through the century in the Nonconformist rank and file (coupled with the fact that when the cause was embraced it was generally the lower reasons, not the higher, that appealed) and the confusion circling round the Education Act of 1870, may stand as proof. To these and to

other things pointing the same way we shall have to return. Just now, it is desired merely to emphasise the fact that it was chiefly in the light thrown upon them by the general liberal tendency that Nonconformity viewed its own causes, that for the most part it argued them on the grounds which that tendency would adduce, and that it walked only (not only as to its actual achievements but as to its declared desires, not only because it must, but in fair content) at a rate with which that tendency could keep step. Of course the struggles which Nonconformity fought through would have been fought through even under the dominance of the loftiest Nonconformist ideal: the Nonconformist ideal held them and their objects in its heart. But they would have been fought as being of and from the loftiest Nonconformist ideal: they would in their common reference to that ideal have found a higher unity than that which enclosed them; and while they would have been cared for no less, the things which were only intermittently and coldly cared for would have taken their due place in Nonconformity's care. It was not, as a general rule, under the ultimate ideal's inspiration that Nonconformity's nineteenth century wars were waged. Yet, as was said, now and then that ultimate ideal fought for and gripped a yielding soul. And so once more, we see Nonconformity disturbed by a magnetism from far away, yet not sensitive enough to trace it back and up to its source—moved by a consciousness that it had yet far to go back before it had really reached its old homeland, but by a consciousness only rarely quick and explicit and usually one to which it did not hold the key.

That Nonconformity should, speaking generally, work for its reforms from the standpoint of the secular liberal tendency, bethinking itself only partially and occasionally of the higher ground to which they might be traced back, was natural enough. The great Reform Act of 1832 enfranchised the ranks from which Nonconformists were chiefly drawn; and the majority of those so enfranchised were of course on the progressive or democratic side; so that many of the newly enfranchised took it as their whole right and duty to work for Nonconformity's advancement from the general progressive point of view, ignoring or not knowing,

that the duty of working for Nonconformity's advancement rested ultimately upon other sanctions, and that the whole thing ought to be viewed as a matter of "imperative" rather than of "right." So the alliance between Nonconformity and the general liberal tendency would be formed for them, and the cause of the first come to appear but one aspect of the cause of the second. Also, it is a fair surmise that the leaning of Nonconformity to something in the nature of an alliance with the State—even to a share in the ordering of the State—the leaning which dated from the old Commonwealth days and which had then temporarily obtained its will, but which had perforce been latent for so long, reasserted itself when the enfranchisement of Nonconformists on a large scale gave it its renewed chance. But that is not the whole. It must be remembered that the Reform Act was the first of a series of measures which gradually threw the government of the country into the democracy's hands. The "general liberal" tendency came henceforth to mean, not merely a tendency on the part of the governing classes to legislate liberally for the people's good, but a tendency to more and more completely worked out self-government on the people's part—a very different thing. In other words, it was the *principle* of democracy, not the principle that legislation should work for the democracy's good, which began to hold sway. And now came in what may be termed a reverse or reacting influence from the idea, possessing Nonconformity so largely, that Nonconformity meant the democratic principle applied to Church affairs. Formerly, when Nonconformity had been engaged in its fight for life, in the earlier stages of its struggle for the right to be, the similarity between its own struggle and that of the democracy had helped to imbue it with that idea, as we saw.[1] Now, the thing worked the reverse way; and Nonconformity was held, through the sanction it gave to the democratic idea in its own Church affairs, to sanction it elsewhere too; through which process of inference the alliance between Nonconformity and the general liberal tendency won another bond. The rightness or otherwise of the democracy idea in national government of course belongs to the political field, and does

[1] *Supra*, pp. 126, 127.

not concern us here; but it is certain that to reason from a supposed validity of the democracy idea in Church affairs to the validity of the democracy idea in national Government is unsound, inasmuch as the premiss itself is false. But, with things not thought out, the reasoning—deliberate or instinctive, for that qualifying phrase must be employed once more—was natural enough. And so would come the consciousness that whatever democracy might demand on grounds of political expediency it was Nonconformity's presumed duty to support on grounds of right, together with a companion consciousness that Nonconformity's own causes could be best served by putting them among the causes democracy espoused. It is sometimes pleaded, as indicating how on the whole the first-named consciousness has worked in the right direction, that political history has in many things followed the line to which Nonconformists have pointed; and Lord Palmerston's saying that "in the long run English politics will follow the consciences of the Dissenters" has been quoted again and again. But it is necessary to distinguish. It is quite true that as between a State Church which claims to be national and is not—which, in brief, is in a false position—and Nonconformist Churches (since the continuance of these as Churches does not depend upon political currents or political change) the Nonconformists will be more likely to survey political possibilities in general with unbiassed minds and be so much more likely to decide them wisely. The very fact that a State Church is not really a national Church must make its members, and especially its clergy, suspicious of all political change, since change, once it sets in, will find out all the weak places, detect all the inconsistencies, and sweep away all the things not founded upon a rock. Among the suggestions made by a general liberal tendency which does *not* stand for the "general principle of democracy," but merely for the principle of legislating on the people's true behalf, the Nonconformists may well be able to judge with better prospects of judging well. But it does not follow that with an alliance once formed between Nonconformists and a general liberal tendency which *does* stand for the "general principle of democracy," the Nonconformists will keep their advantage; and it is much too early yet to say what the final

verdict will be. It is only gradually since 1832 that the "democracy" principle in national government has been moving to its full power. For that matter, its full power is still unattained. Whether it, and those who espouse it, will be justified by history's considered judgment remains to be seen. In any case, it is clear that under such an alliance as that indicated the conditions are quite different from what they were. For acceptance of the "democracy" principle really forecloses all questions before they arise (the statement might be countered, of course, in a purely political argument, by a declaration that the democratic instinct is on the whole right and true, but that, be it correct or not, is irrelevant to our present purpose), so that any application of Palmerston's phrase is rendered impossible at once. Obviously, to say that English politics in "the long run follow the consciences of the Dissenters" becomes meaningless if the consciences of the Dissenters themselves follow the "conscience" of the "democratic idea." The "consciences of Dissenters" could only act, under such conditions, on the assumption that Nonconformity stood aside—at any rate temporarily and for purposes of judgment—from the general liberal tendency, this having become what it is; and this very standing aside would show that Nonconformity had suddenly felt its obligation to take a distinctive and higher ground of its own. But all this is by way of parenthesis, and is meant merely as a reminder that any alliance between Nonconformity and the general liberal tendency cannot be justified by any reference to Nonconformist history belonging to a time before the general liberal tendency became what it is now. The naturalness of such an alliance—which was the main point—remains. The "democratic idea applied to Church affairs," accepted as the essential thing in Nonconformity, was easily and naturally taken to sanction the same idea in national government, and to sanction also Nonconformity's throwing of its cause into the causes which the exponents of that idea espoused, and taking it as one amid the rest.

The most convenient method of dealing with the facts will be to summarise as briefly as may be the battles which Nonconformity eagerly and strenuously fought, and then to

turn to those other matters wherein failure to apprehend the ultimate Nonconformist principle kept Nonconformist energies down.

It is with an effort to remedy the Church-rate grievance that the list of engagements, successful or unsuccessful, begins, save that the final release of Quakers and Moravians from the necessity of taking oaths under any circumstances whatever, a release granted in 1833,[1] should as a preliminary be set down. The rate suggested itself at once as one of the most pressing burdens that Nonconformists had to carry; and considerations of elementary justice, one would have supposed if one did not know how easily such considerations may lose their power over prejudiced minds, would have made it a light matter to release Nonconformists from the obligation of maintaining ecclesiastical buildings which they did not use. Instead of a light matter, however, the obtaining of release turned out to be a matter of nearly forty years. The member for Exeter—Mr. Divett—brought in a Bill for the abolition of Church-rates in 1834, but withdrew it at the Government's request, and on receiving a promise that Government itself would take action.[2] The redemption of the promise took the form of a Bill to substitute for the rate an annual grant from the Consolidated Fund—a proposal which, smothered under the dislike of Churchmen who deemed it an abandonment of their cause, and under the disgust of Nonconformists who after the Government's promise thought themselves betrayed, fell speedily to the ground.[3] Nonconformist anger, however, was not to be allayed; and a great Nonconformist Convention held in the same year was the beginning of an agitation destined to be loud and long.[4] The year which saw this first disappointment on the Church-rate question also saw the first disappointment on the question of admitting Nonconformists to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge; for a Bill relaxing the terms of subscription so far as to allow Nonconformist graduation in Arts, Physic, and Law (a Bill

[1] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860*, iii. 177.
[2] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xxii. 3 S. 381-401.
[3] *Ibid.* xxii. 3 S. 1012 ff.
[4] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 481, 482.

based upon a petition from sixty-seven eminent members of the Cambridge Senate) was, after passing the Commons, thrown out by the Lords.[1] The first actual victory of the Nonconformists falls to be recorded next. It was won in 1836 on two comparatively minor, yet not at all unimportant, points. Hitherto Nonconformist births had not been registered, since civil registration did not exist and Nonconformists would not apply to the parish clergyman; and Nonconformists had been compelled to go to the parish Church for the marriage ceremony if it was to be valid in the eyes of the law.[2] Two Acts, passed in the year just named, swept these grievances from the path.[3] The same year witnessed the abolition of the direct collection of tithes, and the commutation of tithe for a rent-charge,[4] a measure which, though not designed for the relief of Nonconformists, at any rate brought to the Quakers what we have seen them more than once vainly trying to obtain.[5] Meanwhile the fighting mood in respect of Church-rates had been mounting high. In October 1836 a Church-Rate Abolition Society had been formed;[6] and two thousand petitions for abolition had sufficiently impressed Lord Melbourne's Government to make it bring in a Bill in the following year. The Bill was this time no sham, for it provided that the rate should absolutely cease, money in lieu of its proceeds being supplied out of pew-rents or out of more economical management of Church property; but from the standpoint of the Establishment the fatal objection lay here—that compensation for the lost rates was to come out of moneys which the Church would in any case have been able to handle, and so

[1] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xxv. 3 S. 653, 886.

[2] This had been the state of the matter since 1753. Up to that time Nonconformists could marry in their own churches. The Act which prevented them from doing so (Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act) had not been specially directed against them. But there had been so many irregular and clandestine marriages —in the Fleet Prison, for instance—by immoral and debt-burdened clergymen, whose agents actually entrapped passers-by into marriage, that the scandal had to be stopped. It was stopped by the Act of 1753, which allowed marriage only in the parish church, banns being published first. See Lecky, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (ed. 1892), ii. 115-118, 124-126.

[3] May, *Constitutional History of England 1760–1860*, iii. 188-193.

[4] Cornish, *The English Church in the Nineteenth Century*, i. 120, 121.

[5] See Index under "Quakers and tithes."

[6] Skeats and Miall, as former note, p. 484.

was no compensation at all. Opposition was so strong that the Bill had to be given up, and the Nonconformists were disappointed once more.[1] The year brought, however, at least the beginnings of success; for it saw the churchwardens of Braintree attempting to levy a Church-rate which the majority of the vestry had not approved, the contention of the churchwardens being that they had sufficient authority in themselves and in their office; and it saw the institution of the long lawsuit which twelve years after terminated in a decision by the House of Lords that the churchwardens did not possess the power they claimed. Without the vestry's vote, the rate could not be enforced.[2] Meanwhile, Bill after Bill for dealing with the matter, brought forward by various private members of the House of Commons, had met the usual fate; and the Government had steadily refused to move. But through the country the anti-rate agitation went on: the steadfast refusal of many Nonconformists to pay—followed as it was in some cases by imprisonment—quickened resentment and resolve; and when the decision of the Lords in the Braintree case was at last announced agitation became fiercer still. For a moment, however, we must look back to remark that in 1852 the process of reforming the Burial Laws began with an Act dividing public cemeteries into a consecrated and unconsecrated portion, in the second of which Nonconformists might conduct their funeral services according to their own rites[3] (the Act applied to London only, but was extended to the provinces in the following year[4]); and we may also look forward for a moment, as well as back, to note that in 1854 the degree of Bachelor of Arts was thrown open to Nonconformist students at Oxford, Cambridge improving upon this in 1856 by clearing the way to the Mastership of Arts as well.[5] Between these two gains stands an Act of 1855 by which the limitations of the "new Toleration Act" of 1812[6] were removed, and prosecutions for worshipping in an unregistered building were declared

[1] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xxxvi. 3 S. 1207, etc.

[2] Paul, *History of Modern England*, ii. 40-43; May, as former note, iii. 205, 206.

[3] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, cxxii. 3 S. 1351.

[4] *Ibid.* cxxix. 3 S. 1824.

[5] *Ibid.* cxxxv. 3 S. 1361; cxliii. 3 S. 1490.

[6] *Supra*, pp. 301, 302.

impossible henceforth.[1] It was not, however, with any intention of concession to the Nonconformists behind it that this Act went through. Very curiously, it was found that while the existing limitation was practically a dead letter so far as Nonconformist worship was concerned, the more energetic clergy of the Established Church—some of whom, having been aroused by the revelations of Nonconformist growth made in the census of 1851,[2] wished to recover lost ground among the people by special services in theatres and the like—were hampered; and it was due to the evangelical Lord Shaftesbury's activity that the limitation was broken down.[3] Reverting now to the Church-rate question, the next item in its history is the series of Abolition Bills introduced from year to year after 1853 by Sir William Clay or Sir John Trelawny.[4] Though they failed on each occasion, it was gradually coming to be felt that some change must be made; the refusal of many vestries to levy a rate at all, following upon the decision in the Braintree case to the effect that without a vestry's warrant no rate could stand, showed the defenders of the existing law that their position was not so impregnable as they had supposed; and various suggestions for compromise—such as exempting those who declared themselves Dissenters — were made.[5] Sir John Trelawny's Bill of 1857 actually passed the Commons, but was lost in the Lords.[6] After 1859 the series of Parliamentary efforts for abolition was broken for a while; but in 1861, another great Nonconformist Convention or Conference having been held, they recommenced, and Sir John Trelawny took up again his annual leadership of the assault at the breach.[7] It was some years yet before the end came; but the end was clear to the discerning, the *Times* going so far as to say that the rate was gone and that nothing could save it, and that Church people had better learn to maintain their own places of worship as the Dissenters maintained theirs.[8]

[1] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, cxxxix. 3 S. 2141.

[2] *Supra*, p. 379.

[3] Hodder, *Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury* (ed. 1892), pp. 510-515.

[4] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 542-544.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.* p. 543.

[7] *Ibid.* pp. 591, 593.

[8] May 12, 1865.

On their way to their goal Nonconformists picked up a not inconsiderable success by getting rid, through an Act of 1866, of the "Declaration" which had been substituted for the sacramental test when the Test and Corporation Acts had been repealed.[1] The closing date of the long Church-rate war proved to be 1868, in which year Mr. Gladstone——acting on a suggestion whose author has been variously named as Mr. Waldegrave-Leslie, Lord Robert Grosvenor, and Mr. John Bright—introduced and carried a characteristically English compromise which, while it left existing liability for Church-rates unaltered, provided that no machinery for recovering them from the unwilling should henceforward be used.[2] Three years later on the fighters in the conflict which had run parallel with that over Church-rates—the fighters for the freedom of the Universities—achieved a triumph as signal; and in 1871 Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham were open to Nonconformists in all things except Fellowships, College Headships, and Professorships in Divinity.[3] After this there is not much to add; but mention must be made of the further change in the Burial Laws accomplished in 1880, by which Nonconformist ministers were permitted to officiate in the consecrated as well as in the unconsecrated parts of the cemeteries,[4] and of the further enlargement of University opportunities afforded to Nonconformists in 1882 by the opening to them of those Headships and Fellowships from which under the earlier Act they were barred.[5] These are the outstanding points in Nonconformity's nineteenth-century "struggle for equality"—apart of course from the matters reserved for separate survey: so one by one the forts surrounding the central position were carried; and so were Nonconformity's

[1] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, cxciii. 3 S. 1098-1101.

[2] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, May 18, 1866 (royal assent); Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, ii. 161.

[3] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, June 16, 1877 (royal assent); Low and Sanders, *History of England 1839–1901*, p. 247. Divinity degrees were still barred by the necessity for subscription. But just at the time of writing the opening of these is being discussed.

[4] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, Sept. 7, 1880 (royal assent).

[5] This was accomplished by the action of the University Commissioners appointed under an Act of 1877. It ought to be said that there has been in the Universities throughout a progressive section which, in the interests of education, desired all restrictions of a religious kind to be removed.

courage and power put to the proof only to issue certified from the ordeal.

There remain for survey those other aspects of Nonconformity's "struggle for equality" in the consideration of which it may be more clearly seen how Nonconformity was conscious of an ultimate call to its original standing-ground, and was nevertheless unable to interpret the call in all the significance it ought to have borne. And mainly, as was said, it is the Disestablishment question and the Education question that under this head claim our thought.

On the surface, nothing is more puzzling to the historian of Nonconformity than the comparative apathy with which the question of disestablishment was regarded by Nonconformists as a whole through a period when in other respects the struggle for Nonconformist rights was so keen. Having regard to the Nonconformist ideal, it is precisely the question which one would have expected to find Nonconformity pushing to the front—not primarily on the grounds which, when Nonconformity did push the matter, were usually adopted, but on higher and nobler grounds by far. For to a view of religion and the Church which makes religion and the Church begin wholly in inward spiritualities and work themselves out from there, which makes the interior self-identification of the soul's life with the indwelling life of Christ the only true formative and constructive force behind whatever religious organisation may come into being —to such a view of religion and the Church the assumption by the State of right or power to direct, control, legislate for, a Christian Church implies dishonour to religion which ought not for an instant to be brooked ; and the declaration by the State that some particular Church is to be imposed upon the nation and to claim support from the nation in the mass implies that an organisation already in existence can order an inward life, if not to make that organisation, at any rate to maintain it when it has been made. Nor is it any argument against all this to say that the Nonconformist, if only his own religious liberty be amply guarded and his own Church be permitted to hold its ground, might well be content to leave an Established Church unassailed. He is responsible for no religion but his own—so the objection

runs. Why wax hot over what other people do? The answer is obvious. He *is* in this instance responsible for what other people do; for what the State does is done, partially at least, in his name. It is precisely because the State, in setting up a Church Establishment, is, as he thinks, doing dishonour to religion, that the Nonconformist, himself a member of the State, is constrained to do what he can in order to free from error and blame the State to which he belongs. The State's error is his own.[1] Nor need he be restrained by the plausible contention that it is a breach of that toleration which Nonconformity claims for itself to be aggressive against the Establishment fact or idea. The contention loses all its force when it is remembered that toleration simply requires freedom for every man, Conformist and Nonconformist alike, to set up and maintain the Church he holds to be most in accord with the will of God. It does *not* require (and therefore there need be no hesitation in yielding to other considerations which forbid) that the second should, if he finds himself compelled to afford actual support to the first, make no attempt to have the compulsion removed. It is under the stress of considerations such as these that we should have expected to find nineteenth-century Nonconformity kindled by the disestablishment idea: it was so ardent, so eager, so ready for fight; and yet it was only rarely that kindling came. Now and then the flame sprang up; but the torches prepared to catch it were but few. The ultimate call of the Nonconformist ideal in this regard was but faintly heard. And yet perhaps the puzzle is not so great as it seems. One would have expected—it has been said—that Nonconformity would have been hot upon the disestablishment crusade at a time when in other respects the struggle for Nonconformist rights was so keen. But perhaps it was just because the struggle was in the main conceived as one for Nonconformist *rights*

[1] This will not, of course, cover any interference by Nonconformity (by Nonconformist members of Parliament, for instance) in the internal affairs of the Establishment. It is sometimes claimed by Nonconformists that so long as an Established Church exists they have a right to a voice in the government of it. They may have the right—that is, no one outside their own ranks may have any title to complain. But clearly it is a right which their fundamental principle requires them to renounce.

that on the disestablishment matter comparative apathy prevailed—in other words, because it was mainly from the standpoint of the general liberal tendency and of what could be accomplished under that tendency's inspiration and within the limits which that tendency observed, that Nonconformity worked. Scarcely, yet, was that tendency prepared to assail the establishment idea. The mere existence of a State Church—so long as redress were won for those more tangible grievances whose removal we were cataloguing just now—would seem to that tendency a comparatively small affair: it may be doubted, indeed, whether that tendency could ever touch the question at all except on the ground that Establishments had become distasteful in the eyes of democratic opinion:[1] certainly the higher reasons implicit in the Nonconformist ideal are not reasons which the tendency could appreciate or with which it could deal. They belong to a different plane. And Nonconformity, only feebly alive to such loftier reasons, content for the most part to put its foot where the general liberal tendency put its own and to keep close step with its ally—pushing its *rights* with no lack of zeal, because there the general liberal tendency would back it, but forgetting to a great extent those *obligations* which could not be translated into terms of immediate claim—forgot, or went far towards forgetting, what was really the central and most essential point of all.

The facts in connection with the disestablishment question from 1828 onwards may be briefly told. Under the new sense of freedom induced by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts Nonconformity did at any rate set itself to the praiseworthy task of disseminating information concerning the principles for which it stood. The "Ecclesiastical Knowledge Society," founded in 1829, prepared a large literature, in book and pamphlet form—old works reprinted, new works specially written, biographies of Nonconformity's great men—in which, besides the powerful arguments and calls for reform it advanced in connection with the remaining

[1] The main ground on which disestablishment in Wales is at the time of writing being advocated. The contention is of course a perfectly valid one within its own sphere and from the democratic standpoint. The flaw from the true Nonconformist platform is the apparent implication that if democratic opinion approves it, establishment should be left undisturbed.

disabilities to which Nonconformity was subject, the disestablishment principle was distinctly affirmed.[1] The work of this Society, however, was only aggressive so far as aggression can be implied in the publication of books and tracts, and positive action was not tried. A somewhat more strenuous piece of work was attempted when Josiah Conder founded the "Religious Freedom Society" in 1839—the Society basing itself simply and solely upon a declaration that all enforced support of religious establishments was in itself unjust and contrary to Christian principles rightly understood.[2] But the Society soon languished; partly because the bulk of Nonconformists did not feel the magnetism of the great idea, and partly because those who did feel it feared that to press disestablishment might bring upon Nonconformity a charge of something like "anarchy," and so lose to it much of the political support it enjoyed.[3] A year or two later, however, there appeared upon the scene a man who realised that if Nonconformity was to be true to its vocation, no difficulties must be allowed to stand in the way of faithfulness to the Nonconformist spirit's ultimate demands. Edward Miall[4] had heard the *whole* of Nonconformity's call; and he had been led by degrees to feel that the advocacy of disestablishment was to be his life's work—the chief thing influencing him to this decision having been the imprisonment of Edward Baines, a member of Miall's Leicester Church, for non-payment of the Church-rate. This special but by no means isolated instance of injustice to Nonconformity had driven Miall down to first principles, and had made him realise that the system of a Church Establishment must be attacked at its base. So fired was he that pastorate and pastoral work were relinquished for good; and Miall, having removed to London, set himself to challenge the citadel of ecclesiastical privilege, let who would help or stand aside. On April 14, 1841, he issued the first number of the *Nonconformist* newspaper, which he

[1] Skeats and Miall, *History of the Free Churches of England 1688–1891*, pp. 471-473.

[2] Skeats and Miall, as previous note, pp. 489-491.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. 491, 492.

[4] For particulars of Miall's life, see *Life of Edward Miall*, by his son Arthur Miall.

was to edit for so long, and so much of whose contents he was himself to write. Thenceforward, although taking his full share in the agitation for the removal of those Nonconformist grievances which the man in the street might see deserved the name, Miall made disestablishment the one supreme plank in his platform. He was no mere agitator. It was not even upon the injustice to Nonconformity which the existence of a State Church involved that his gaze was most steadfastly fixed. He saw the injustice, of course, but he took a wider survey. "Before Dissenters can hope to make way," he wrote, "they must make the basis of their operations national rather than sectarian—must aim not so much to right themselves as to right Christianity." It was in the very first number of the *Nonconformist* that these phrases occurred, and similar phrases are scattered everywhere. And in his last public words he expressed the hope that "the Church of England, as the instrument of regenerating mankind, may ere long be free to use her great power over the souls of men, unimpeded by any of the shackles that worldly wisdom has mistakenly thrown around her." From utterances like these it may be gathered how utterly religious was the platform on which Miall stood. In him, in fact, the disestablishment idea came to its rightful place and power as implied in the ultimate Nonconformist ideal. He did not find, however, that Nonconformists as a whole were prepared to see as he saw. With too much reason Miall declared in an early issue of his paper: "We solemnly arraign the body of Dissenting ministers in England at the bar of truth. . . . We charge the body of Dissenting ministers with unfaithfulness to sacred principles, evasion of a noble mission, and seeming recklessness of all the mighty interests at issue." Miall had not only to act as representative of a real Nonconformist feeling: he had almost to create it. Still, though there was so much discouragement, he did not labour altogether in vain. The great Disruption in Scotland in 1843 helped him by focussing public attention upon the general question of the relation between State and Church: Sir James Graham's Education Bill of the same year[1] drew sluggard Nonconformists from their tents; and by 1844

[1] *Infra*, p. 418.

there was sufficient strength of feeling to bring about the formation of the "British Anti-State-Church Association," on whose platform some, though by no means all, of the prominent Nonconformists were willing to step.[1] The Society—which changed its name in 1853 to that of the "Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control," and is commonly known by the abbreviated designation of the "Liberation Society"—has ever since, by meetings, lectures, and Conferences, sought to keep the eyes of Nonconformists open to the importance of the disestablishment question, and has indeed numbered not only Nonconformists, but Churchmen, in its ranks. Miall, meanwhile, was lecturing and persuading up and down the land; and in 1852 he found his way through Parliament's doors. Before speaking of his work within, however, we must turn aside to notice how in one matter, at least—a matter in which the question of the State's relation to religion was involved, though on a much smaller scale than in the case of the Established Church—the Nonconformist spirit obtained all its way. We saw some time since how in the early part of the century the "Regium Donum" became a parliamentary grant, in other words a virtual endowment of Nonconformity by the State; and we observed how Nonconformist voices of protest had arisen from time to time.[2] They grew louder and louder as the years passed on. "Dissenting Deputies" and the Board of the "Three Denominations" alike condemned the grant: the angry article in the *Congregational Magazine* (1837) we have already named;[3] and from that time forward it became evident that Nonconformists as a whole would not be content to rest till they had put themselves right. Of course the principle of State support of religion was directly involved, even though it was only for charitable purposes, not for the actual maintenance of worship, that the grant was made—hence the relevance of mentioning the matter here; and one is glad that Nonconformity in this instance, particularly since the question was one of applying the Nonconformist principle to itself, read the necessities of the case aright. It has to be confessed that even now perfect

[1] Skeats and Miall, as former note, p. 497.

[2] *Supra*, pp. 322, 323.

[3] *Supra*, p. 188 note.

unanimity did not prevail; for Dr. Pye-Smith, notwithstanding that he was himself a member of the Anti-State-Church Association, maintained by some rather sophistical reasoning that there was nothing in the reception of the grant inconsistent with Nonconformity's professed faith. But the general opinion was too strong; and in 1851 it was announced in the House of Commons that, in deference to the wishes of the Dissenters themselves, the grant would not be put upon the votes.[1] Returning from this digression to the fortunes of the disestablishment idea, we find that in 1856 Miall went so far as to move in the Commons some resolutions in favour of disestablishing the Irish Church. They were of course voted down; and Miall's defeat at the subsequent dissolution kept him from Parliament for twelve years. When he came back in 1869 he found Gladstone carrying that Irish disestablishment which he had himself moved for so long before, and this was so far to the good. But Miall was not content. In 1871—disappointed and yet roused by the Education Act of the preceding year—he commenced that series of motions for the disestablishment of the Church of England which he persisted in for three sessions,[2] till failure of strength compelled his retirement in 1874. Even after that his pen kept up seven years longer, insistently and hopefully, the message for whose proclamation he knew himself to have been sent. His name deserves to be held in honour, and his work to be remembered; for in him that ultimate call of the Nonconformist spirit found one of the few voices which in the course of the century echoed it clearly and well. For let it be asserted that for Miall disestablishment meant nothing less than the victory of religion. The agitation never became—as it may so easily become—a mean thing in Miall's hands. It was in and from the Nonconformist ultimate that Miall steadfastly and always viewed the problem. Indeed, perhaps only in one other instance did the problem wear an aspect so high. Of Dale as the finest and most spiritual nineteenth-century representative of the Nonconformist ideal we

[1] For further particulars, see Dale, *History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 526, 527.

[2] See Arthur Miall's *Life of Edward Miall*, chap. xvi.

have spoken. We should expect that on this implication of the Nonconformist spirit Dale would have something to say. And Dale, though in the very nature of the case he could not become a man of one idea as Miall practically was, knew full well that the Nonconformist ideal meant unending hostility to the establishment idea. One may say of him, as contrasted with Miall, that while Miall looked back from the disestablishment idea to the ultimate ground of it in the Nonconformist conception, Dale, starting from the Nonconformist conception, came naturally to the disestablishment idea. But so far as concerns the treatment of the idea itself, this left both men in the same position—bent upon a treatment worthy and great. Dale spoke of the question again and again; but the campaigns of 1875 and 1876 which Dale, in company with his friend Guinness Rogers, made on behalf of the freedom of religion from State control stand out specially as one of the very few adequate vindications and presentations which in this regard the Nonconformist ideal received.[1] But the list is far too scanty. Societies of which only one has seriously attacked the question, and of which only one has endured—Miall, Dale—two or three men labouring to rouse a Nonconformist public which could be only temporarily and sporadically roused, and which would at other times do no more than turn and mutter a feeble "yes" in its sleep—that is the whole tale. There were certainly other occasions than those we have named on which the question of disestablishment came up—sometimes in not very desirable ways. But we may fairly say of most of them that they were created out of a feeling that if the general liberal tendency did not go far enough to embody disestablishment on its programme, it ought to do so, and out of something like irritation because it did not. They marked attempts to push that tendency beyond the limits to which it kept, rather than consecrations to the call of the Nonconformist ideal. Any criticism that may be implied in all this does not, it may be well to say, mean that even if the disestablishment question had been rightly related to the Nonconformist ideal in the estimation of Nonconformists at large, aggressive action in

[1] A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, pp. 377-397.

the matter would necessarily have taken any other course than it actually did, or have been more constant and strong than it actually was. That would still have been a matter for careful consideration to decide. But it does mean that the whole thing would have been more fervent in Nonconformity's blood, and that Nonconformity would have looked upon the matter in other ways than those which seemed to suffice. And concerning the later years of the century there is on this theme practically nothing to say. Taking the period from 1828 onwards, we can only judge thus—that Nonconformity heard now and then, here and there, the ultimate Nonconformist call, as the cited names bear witness; but that only two or three elect ones understood, as the general apathy with which on this particular question the elect and understanding ones had to contend makes too sadly plain and sure.

To pick up the threads of the education question, we have to return to 1820, the year in which, as we have seen, the Nonconformists succeeded in defeating Brougham's Bill,[1] and must note a few outstanding incidents up to the settlement made by the 1870 Act. For a long time after Brougham's measure went under, Government left education alone. But people generally began to see more and more clearly that sooner or later education would have to be made a national affair, and taken into government charge; and it needs no argument to prove that the general liberal tendency would do more than consent. An attempt made by Roebuck and Grote in 1833 to pledge the House of Commons to the establishment of a national scheme, although it did not itself succeed, induced Lord Althorp, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to propose that an annual grant of twenty thousand pounds should be divided between the educational Societies—the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society—in whose hands the education of the masses lay.[2] The result of the plan could hardly be displeasing to those who wished to see definite Church of England teaching included in an educational course; for as the grants were supplementary and propor-

[1] *Supra*, pp. 304, 305.

[2] Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, xx. 3 S. 139-174, 733-736.

tionate to voluntary contributions, the National Society, having wealthier supporters and consequently longer subscription lists, easily left the British Society behind. The next movement of the Government intensified the rivalry which had already been shown. In 1840 the Education Committee of the Privy Council was set up, grants were increased by ten thousand pounds, and a College for teachers, a "Normal College"—having attached to it a model school open to members of all religious denominations, and without any dogmatic basis of its own, though special dogmatic instruction might be given in specified hours by ministers not on the College staff—was proposed.[1] The whole scheme roused violent opposition at once; for the clergy—looking upon themselves, as they had always done, as the special overseers of education—complained bitterly that they had no places upon the Committee of Council, and of course viewed the "Normal College" with utmost dislike. In the end, the scheme, so far as the College part of it was concerned, had to be given up. Four years afterwards Sir James Graham, Home Secretary in the Government of Sir Robert Peel, introduced his "Factory Bill," the educational clauses of which provided that all children in manufacturing districts must attend schools—that these schools were to be built with money obtained from grants, from the poor-rate, and from voluntary subscriptions, in the proportion of one-third from each—that any deficiency in the funds for upkeep should be drawn from the poor-rate—and that the clergyman of the parish was, as in the case of Brougham's abortive Bill, to have the whole thing under his unquestioned and undivided authority.[2] The hostility of the Nonconformists was so strongly shown—the days of petitions, protests, and meetings, came back with all their old clash and clang—and the few amendments which Sir James Graham was willing to make were so worthless in Nonconformist eyes, that the Bill was withdrawn at last. Things were again, therefore, as they had been before—the two Societies doing their best, and the best of the National

[1] Adams, *The Elementary School Contest*, pp. 107 ff.

[2] Adams, as previous note, pp. 119 ff. Dale (*History of English Congregationalism*, pp. 654-658) gives a very full account of Graham's Bill.

Society going far beyond the best of its rival, which meant that education passed more and more into definitely Church of England hands. During the next few years various incidents into which we need not enter with any detail—the extension of grants, the instructions of the Committee of the Council as to inserting in trust-deeds clauses which practically made the clergyman the supreme authority and the Bishop the arbiter in cases of dispute[1]—accentuated the difficulties of the situation from the Nonconformist point of view. As an unfortunate result, many Nonconformists came to think that education ought not to be a Government matter at all; though by accepting such an opinion they of course cut themselves off from that general liberal tendency on which in other things they were so ready to rely. Probably for a time the majority took that view; and although it did not long keep its attraction, and by the time the great conflict of 1870 arrived had been almost everywhere dropped, Nonconformity had lost its way. The definite assertion that while it was the undoubted business of Government to provide for the education of the people, it was not the business of the Government to teach religion in any shape or form—the propounding of the "secular education" system as the only solution of the case—was scarcely to be looked for as the general deliverance of Nonconformity now. It is assuredly the only assertion Nonconformity could consistently offer, the only solution Nonconformity could consistently propose. But the willingness, which had endured through many years, to accept grants for the schools of the British Society on many of whose governing bodies Nonconformists served, must have tended to make Nonconformist voices husky as they attempted to declare the Nonconformist principle which had been violated so long; and the fact that it had been so violated made a handy weapon for those on the "dogmatic teaching" side. The idea that Government should not touch education at all might provide a refuge rather attractive to some. And when that proved uninhabitable Nonconformity had gone far to compromise its case. Had the clear vision of the Nonconformist ideal stood always before Nonconformity's eyes, and had

[1] Adams, as former note, pp. 138 ff.

Nonconformity seen penetratingly and understood, the whole course of the subsequent controversy would have been—as its antecedents would have been—different far. Then came Mr. Forster's Education Act of 1870 (Gladstone, of course, being Prime Minister), which established School Boards in districts where educational facilities were shown to be inadequate, and on the religious side provided that "undenominational religious instruction" was to be given in the new Board Schools, though children whose parents objected might withdraw them from that instruction under the "Cowper-Temple" conscience clause.[1] Even this much had not been won without a fierce fight in the Commons: according to the original draft of the Bill, School Boards would have been able to institute denominational instruction of strictest type had they felt so inclined, as well as subsidise schools that were denominational throughout;[2] and such concessions as were at last secured followed upon strenuous and at times passionate debate, in the course of which occurred the famous passage of arms between Miall and Gladstone, Miall threatening Gladstone with the withdrawal of the Nonconformists' support, and Gladstone begging Miall "for God's sake" not to continue his support for a moment longer than he thought good for his cause.[3] The Bill in its final shape was undoubtedly better from the Nonconformist standpoint than it had been when introduced; yet Nonconformist contentment with its provisions is a thing whereon the Nonconformist spirit must have looked with pity and regret. There was indeed discontent on no inconsiderable scale. Dale, as we might expect, with his friend Guinness Rogers and many more strongly backing him, protested both before and after the Bill was through;[4] but when the matter of "secular education" was broached, no less than four hundred representative ministers and laymen signed a declaration protesting against "the exclusion of the Bible from elementary schools," well-known names like those of Conder and Stoughton standing high and numerous on the roll.[5] And what-

[1] Adams, as former note, p. 224.

[2] Low and Sanders, *History of England 1837–1901*, p. 246.

[3] Adams, *The Elementary School Contest*, p. 231. The incident is alluded to by Arthur Miall in his *Life of Edward Miall*, p. 307.

[4] A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, chapter 12. [5] *Ibid.* p. 288.

ever the immediate feelings of Nonconformists may have been, such opposition as there was died down; so that until Mr. Balfour disturbed the sleeping dogs again in 1902, Nonconformists were satisfied to let things rest. Indeed, the Act of 1902—throwing denominational schools, as it did, with others definitely upon the rates—represented the Nemesis upon Nonconformity's apathy of thirty years before.[1] It was difficult for Nonconformity—and was made all the more difficult by the fact that on the whole the "compromise" had worked without exciting friction—to contend that State subsidising of denominational religious instruction was so very wicked a thing when Nonconformity itself had acquiesced in the subsidising of "undenominational" religious instruction for so long; for the subsidising of denominational instruction could so easily be made to look like a mere extension of a procedure in which Nonconformity had acquiesced. The very assertion of its real principle seemed like an inconsistency on Nonconformity's part because that principle had been forsaken before. But that is beyond our limits. What we have here to notice is that in the education controversy Nonconformity proved once again what it proved elsewhere—that it was conscious of a far-off summons to which it ought by all the obligations of its high descent to be true, but that for the most part it heard the call as if it came faintly and from afar. That it *was* heard was shown by the whole-hearted opposition to any State endowment of religious education manifested by the few, and even by the partial opposition to it manifested by the many. That the hearing was imperfect and dim was shown by the comparatively quiet acquiescence of the many in a system flatly contradicting the fundamental principle which they professed as the very *raison d'être* of their Nonconformist life.

It is, roughly speaking, to within the final thirty years of the nineteenth century that our survey of Nonconformist history, on the side of the Nonconformist struggle for greater freedom and for "equality," has brought us. Up to the point thus reached, it was, on the whole, as we have found reason to conclude, by the pace at which the general liberal tendency

[1] The question thus re-opened is of course at the time of writing open still.

—the secular movement of progress—went forward that Nonconformity set its steps, and to the measure of that tendency's possibilities and aims that Nonconformity regulated its own aims and desires. Of the last thirty years themselves not much more can be said than that Nonconformity was content to keep close company with that tendency still. And as the most pressing of the Nonconformist grievances had, through the previous association of Nonconformity with that tendency, been removed, this meant that Nonconformity came to a great extent to stand as that tendency's friend and ally in enterprises not directly connected with essential Nonconformist aims. The connection which had been formed with a view to Nonconformity's service remained; and since Nonconformity, speaking generally, suspended the pursuit of those ends—of the one great end—which a clear apprehension of the Nonconformist ideal would have caused it to seek, the connection came to be used for the service of ends native to the sphere the other party to the connection ruled. The fact is undoubted, however it may be judged. It was only a natural development from what had gone before that the general progressive tendency should find Nonconformity on its side, and that in the resulting position and arrangement of things the parties of slower movement should find their adherents within the ranks of the Established Church and the parties of speedier advance should find theirs in the Churches outside. The period perhaps lies too near to us for any conclusive verdict as to how far the consequences of this state of things were desirable or otherwise; but it may at any rate be stated, as a mere matter of indisputable historical fact, that Nonconformity came to look upon all suggestions of the general liberal tendency with a preconception in their favour, and that a leaning towards collective Nonconformist support of such suggestions came to be more marked as time passed on. On the other hand, it has to be stated that by degrees, as the situation was realised, there grew up a fear in some Nonconformist minds that Nonconformity was taking on a too distinctly political colour, and was allowing itself to be used too readily as a political tool. The question emerged whether Nonconformity—while it might be natural enough that Non-

conformists as individuals, having regard to their history and to the fact that the general liberal tendency had helped them so well, should be on that tendency's side—was wise in permitting its identification *as* Nonconformity with that tendency to be so close, whether it was wise to act as though the furtherance of that tendency was one of the purposes for which Nonconformity lived. The instinctive feeling with some was that in doing thus Nonconformity was devoting itself to aims which—however right in themselves they might be—had no direct connection with the Nonconformist ideal, and was accordingly misdirecting and misappropriating its own collective strength. Of course it was but slowly that the feeling grew. But events strengthened it after it had once crept in. When the early Home Rule controversy was at its height, the Congregational Union (in 1888) passed a resolution protesting against the policy of the Unionist Government which had come in upon Gladstone's defeat; and though it was not precisely at an official session that the matter came up, the Committee had formally consented to the meeting, and the ordinary session was adjourned to give it its chance. In the view of a man like Dale this was the thrusting into a Congregational Assembly of a matter with which Congregationalism had no concern—and not only so, but something in the nature of sacrilege as well, since it made Congregationalism a servant upon a plane far below that which was its native home. Dale's withdrawal from the Union showed at any rate that the fitness of Nonconformity's close association with the general liberal tendency, the using of Nonconformity's consecrated vessels upon a table which was not the table of the Lord, was not going to be unchallenged, though the minority which thought with him at the time was but small.[1] Dale, it must be remembered, was himself an ardent politician, and certainly did not hold the doctrine that politics were common or unclean. It was merely the *corporate* action of Nonconformity in the political field that he thought to be wrong. For the moment he stood almost alone. But it was after the formation of Free Church Councils, and particularly after

[1] A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, pp. 584, 585.

the formation of the National Free Church Council, whose first meeting took place in 1892, that the feeling grew. The local Councils, it is scarcely necessary to state, were composed of representatives from all the Nonconformist Churches in any particular district; and the National Council was a Federation of the local boards. The movement towards general Nonconformist union showed as genuine a prompting of the Nonconformist spirit as the formation of the Congregational or the Baptist Union had shown; but in the formation of the new united body, as in the formation of the older ones, no clear enunciation of the Nonconformist principle emerged: indeed, the great cause for congratulation would seem to have been found in the fact that the various Nonconformist bodies were able to sink their differences rather than in the common possession or understanding of the Nonconformist ideal; while the positive bond was to be found in common action for evangelistic purposes, for the prevention of overlapping in districts where the multiplication of Nonconformist Churches might mean Nonconformist weakness rather than Nonconformist strength, and for the watching of all Nonconformist interests of every kind. The scheme was hailed with enthusiasm by nearly all; but once again Dale held aloof. He feared—circumstances being what they were, and the companionship between Nonconformity and the general liberal tendency being already so close—that the Councils would become agents of political enterprise and of a political creed; and he regarded the "dominion of the State over the Church as perilous to religion, the dominion of the Church over the State as perilous to both."[1] Again, for the time being, he stood almost alone; although, as appeared later on, his friend Guinness Rogers shared his apprehensions in a certain measure.[2] It was not, indeed, till the close of the century and the beginning of the next that the dread of Nonconformity's straying too far into political fields found specially strong expression; but the discussion broke out and grew after the dividing line was crossed. It waxed

[1] A. W. W. Dale, *Life of Dale of Birmingham*, pp. 647-650.
[2] *Fortnightly Review*, February 1909.

hot enough at last, and a good many things alike unwise and untrue were said on both sides. Very naturally those to whom the general liberal tendency was itself anathema joined in, complaining with grotesque exaggeration that Nonconformist pulpits proclaimed Liberal politics up and down the land, and that Nonconformist gatherings were nothing else but Liberal meetings in thin and palpable disguise. On the other hand, those whose love for the general liberal tendency was so strong that they rejoiced to see Nonconformity devoting itself to its help hardly faced the real issue squarely, sometimes denied and at other times justified the fact of the impugned association, sometimes spoke as though the alternative lay between Nonconformity's corporate participation in political work and the giving up of political action by Nonconformist individuals, and sometimes very curiously—with a strange ignorance of the man they professed to revere—appealed to the memory of Dale himself in justification of their views. No final verdict upon the controversy will be attempted here. Looking round the matter as it stands to-day, the observer may perhaps see signs that Nonconformity is conscious of having gone somewhat too far. But that is as it may be. So far as this history is concerned, it may be enough to say that the indisputable tendency—after the close company with the general liberal tendency which Nonconformity had kept so long, and with the worst of the Nonconformist grievances redressed by that tendency's aid, and with no clear vision of the ultimate Nonconformist ideal to keep Nonconformity true—the indisputable tendency, whether or no in this particular instance it prevailed, was for Nonconformity to slip into the position of letting itself be used to some extent by the general liberal tendency for that tendency's own ends, to be used by it instead of using it under the instruction and inspiration of ideals which the general liberal tendency could never see nor know. We have seen how in some directions Nonconformity's association with the secular progressive tendency kept Nonconformity back. It may easily have sent Nonconformity down a false path as well as restrained it from the true. Yet the unrest just alluded to—however

much or little it may in this particular case have been justified—is in itself a hopeful sign. Nonconformity may not have understood. But it has felt. And the unrest adds itself to all the other signs we have noted, helping to show that Nonconformity is hearing the far-off call of its own high ideal, the ultimate summons of the spirit from whose energising it originally came, even though it may not have closed its hand firmly over the interpreting key.

There our survey of Nonconformity leaves it. Nonconformity has not reached home, but it is on the way. And it knows at least that there is a far-off home to be won, a home whence it once came forth. We have seen the spirit which created it showing its glory in Wiclif's thought and Wiclif's speech and Wiclif's soul. We have seen Nonconformity as after its first appearance it lost its first beauty and nobility, and have followed it till the downward way led it at last into a dark valley wherein religion itself almost died. We have seen its partial, yet real, return backward, upward, and home. We have seen how meanwhile the true Nonconformist spirit called and called, sometimes unheard, sometimes dimly heard, sometimes (in individual cases at least) heard and welcomed with joy. And we can but hope, at the end, that the full homeward journey will be accomplished by Nonconformity's massed bands ere long.

The history speaks for itself, bears its own lesson. Thankfulness for all that is great in Nonconformity's past —and there is much—of course it teaches. Certainly, for all its declensions and for all its failures, Nonconformity has not lived and worked in vain. Its roll of great names is bright as any that can be shown beyond its borders. It has had its saints, its heroes, its apostles, in a multitude which no man can number. The history calls out a glad note from those who know what its pages hold. And by what it tells us of the past the history tells also how the future must be made. Nonconformity must recover the true Nonconformist ideal—the Church ideal which insists that all Church order and system, all Church activities,

all Church programmes of doctrine and discipline, must be nothing else than a living Christ working Himself out through the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It is a high Church-ideal, of course (it is the true High Churchism)—yet one not beyond the common man's power either of understanding or striving for it. It is a comprehensive Church ideal; for by embracing it the member of no single denomination need shift his material ground, if only he be satisfied that the denomination to which he belongs is in all its organisation created and sustained by an energising inward life having its dwelling-place in the individual members' hearts. The Episcopalian may be an Episcopalian still; and the Methodist a Methodist still; and so on the whole list through. It is only the *direction* of the life-movement that must be looked upon as changed, and must be changed in actual fact: the movement, if it has been taken as from outward to inward, must be taken as from inward to outward now. It is a Church ideal both mystical and practical, holding firmly both to earth and heaven, but always making all earthly things according to the pattern shown it in the Mount. Most of all, it is a supremely spiritual Church ideal; for its first word is of a living Christ within, and its last word is of a Church which is not made, but which grows out of the irresistible push and pressure of the Christ-life. Indeed, a merely formal religiousness is impossible under its sway. Acceptance of the Nonconformist ideal, obedience to that Nonconformist spirit whose manifestations—so poor, yet even in their poverty so suggestive of a contrasted richness—in our country's religious story we have tried to trace, would mean that spiritual and ecclesiastical revival had come together (the second term having lost all the harshness that disfigures it so often)—and so, surely, the Church must become as Zion, the perfection of beauty, out of which God doth shine.

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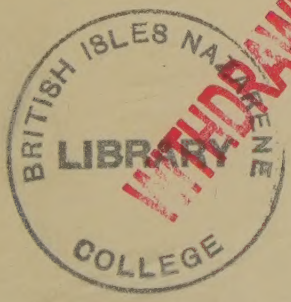

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